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Menno Simons

MENNO SIMONS

His Life, Labors, and Teachings

BY

JOHN HORSCH

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ. I Cor. 3:11. — Menno Simons' motto.

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PREFACE

Menno Simons is today perhaps the most neglected of the prominent leaders in the history of the Christian church. Neither in the English nor the German language is a book on his life and teachings available. The need of such a book seems to be recognized among Mennonites of all classes.

The writer has been led by the desire that a better acquaintance with the life and teachings of the earlier heroes of faith may become the common property of all who would follow their footsteps as they followed Christ's. The style of this book will, it is hoped, not be found more difficult than that of general books on history commonly used by young people.

The search for original prints of Menno Simons' writings in America has had gratifying results. The most important find is a complete copy of Menno's *Of the True Christian Faith and its Power* of which only one defective copy is known in Europe. Special thanks are due to Mr. Thomas L. Montgomery, state librarian of Pennsylvania, through whose kindness complete photographic reproductions of the originals of two important books of Menno have been obtained. Among those who have aided me in the procuration of material or by the loan of valuable books are the management of the Royal Library of the Netherlands at the Hague, Rochester Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y., Crozer Theological Seminary, Upland, Pa., Western Theological Seminary, Pittsburg, Pa., Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N. J., Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pa., Baptist Historical Collection, Hamilton, N. Y., Hon. Samuel W. Pennypacker, Schwenksville, Pa., Dr. Adolf

Fluri, Bern, Switzerland, Dr. Friedrich Roth, Munich, Germany, Mrs. R. J. Smith, New Paris, Ind. (formerly of Balk, Holland), Elders C. H. A. van der Smissen, Berne, Ind., Elias Walter, Frankfort, S. D., John F. Funk, Elkhart, Ind., Abraham L. Friesen, Meade, Kans., Peter Toews, Stern, Alberta, John N. Durr, Martinsburg, Pa., Jonathan B. Fisher, New Holland, Pa. The collection of source material owned by the Mennonite General Conference, at Scottdale, has been freely and gratefully used.

Much important research work in the history of the Anabaptists and early Mennonites remains to be done. It is hoped that the proceeds from the sale of the present book may help to make possible the study of the subject in the great European libraries of whose pertinent source material much has been permitted to remain untouched.

May the inspiring example of the fathers of the church be an incentive to us to stand faithfully for the truth of God's word in a time when it is assailed as freely as it was in the period of the Reformation. To this end may He bless this humble effort.

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XXI

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bib. Ref. Neerl.=*Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica,* Geschriften uit den Tijd der Hervorming in de Nederlanden, ed. by S. Cramer and F. Pijper.

Corp. Ref.=*Corpus Reformatorum,* Melanchthon's works, ed. by Bretschneider and Bindseil.

Corp. Schwenckf.=*Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum,* Letters and Treatises of Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig, vols. I-IV, Leipzig, 1910-1914.

D. B.=Doopsgezinde Bijdragen, Year-book of the Doopsgezinden (Mennonites) in Holland.

De Wette=Dr. Martin Luther's Briefe, Sendschreiben und Bedenken, Berlin, herausgegeben von W. M. L. de Wette.

Erl. Ed.=Erlangen edition of Luther's Writings in the German language.

M. B.=Mennonitische Blaetter, Altona, Germany.

R. E.=Herzog-Hauck, Real-Encyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, third edition.

Van Braght=The Bloody Theatre or Martyrs' Mirror, by Thieleman J. van Braght, Elkhart, Ind., 1886.

Walch=The Walch edition of Luther's Works.

Walch, St. L.=The St. Louis reprint of the Walch edition of Luther's Works.

I

MENNO SIMONS' CONVERSION AND BAPTISM

The native land of Menno Simons is the province of Friesland in the Netherlands (sometimes spoken of as West Friesland to distinguish it from East Friesland which is a part of Germany). His family name was in his mother tongue written Simonsz which stands for Simonszoon, i. e. son of Simon.[1] Concerning his parents, youth, etc., nothing definite is known. He informs us that he was born at Witmarsum and again he speaks of Pingjum as "my father's village." Both places are villages near Bolsward in Friesland.[1] His parents were members of the Roman Catholic state church and had their son educated for the priesthood. Probably all inhabitants of Friesland with the exception of a small number of Jews, were members of this church.

Obviously Menno was thoroughly prepared for the calling of a priest. His writings show that he had a good working knowledge of Latin; he wrote a good Latin style and had also some knowledge of Greek. He was consecrated a priest at Utrecht, in 1524, the date being probably March 26.[2]

In his reply to Gellius Faber Menno Simons gives us interesting information concerning his life as a priest and how he was gradually enlightened which led to his conversion and renunciation of the Roman Church.

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[1] In the Netherlands children, as a rule, did not inherit the family name of their father but used the father's first name with the appendix *zoon* or *dochter* (daughter), e. g., Obbe and Dirk Philipszoon, Jan Volkertszoon, David Joriszoon, Leonard Bouwenszoon, etc.

[2] Vos, *Menno Simons,* p. 166 seq.

"Dear reader, I tell you the truth in Christ and lie not [Rom. 9:1; 1 Tim. 2:7]. It was in the year 1524, in my twenty-eighth year, that I entered the service of the Hierarchy [accepting the office of a vicar] in my father's village called Pingjum." Thus writes Menno in 1554 in an account of his life which he gives in his defense against Gellius Faber. Accordingly the year of his birth was 1496 instead of 1492, as has been commonly believed. This is in all probability correct.

The passage quoted here from Menno's reply to Gellius Faber has marked variations in the different editions of the said book; the original print is lost. In the editions of 1600 and 1646 the age of Menno at the time when he became a vicar at Pingjum, has been omitted, possibly by mistake. The editions of 1621, 1627 and 1633 have, "In the year 28 and my twenty-fourth year"—an obvious error. The great folio edition of Menno's Works has in the introduction the passage as we have quoted it, leading to conclusion that he was born in 1496, but on page 256 the reading varies again. It is reasonably certain that the reading in the introduction to the folio edition is correct.[3]

The parish of Pingjum had two other priests, "the one was my pastor," says Menno, "while the other one was below me in rank. Both had in part read the Scriptures but I had not touched them in my life, for I feared if I should read them, I would be misled [on the supposition that the pope

[3] Vos, *Menno Simons*, pp. 166-188. Gerrit Roosen, a well known Mennonite author, recorded in his own copy of Menno's works various data concerning Menno Simons, giving the years 1492 and 1559 respectively as the dates of his birth and death. These notes were made in 1671, in the sixtieth year of the writer. The book containing these records is in the library of S. W. Pennypacker, former governor of Pennsylvania. Compare *D. B.*, 1881, pp. 34-39. It may be of interest to notice that of not a few prominent men of the Reformation time the birth-days are unknown. Martin Luther was uncertain about the year of his birth. His mother was asked by Melanchthon concerning his birthday. The answer given was that Martin was born on the day before St. Martin's day, but concerning the year it was impossible to answer with certainty: 1483 is generally accepted as the year of Luther's birth, but according to the testimony of his mother it may have been 1482 or 1484.

and the official representatives of the church alone are in a position to understand the Scriptures properly]. Behold such an ignorant preacher I was for about two years."

"In the first year thereafter," Menno continues, "a thought occurred to me, as often as I had to do with the bread and wine in the Mass, that they are not the flesh and blood of the Lord. I considered this a suggestion of the devil who would rob me of my faith. I mentioned it often in the confessional, sighed and prayed, yet I could not be freed from this thought.

"Those two young men [the other priests of the place] and myself spent our time daily in playing, drinking and other diversions, in all vanity.

"At length I resolved that I would give myself to reading the New Testament attentively. I had not proceeded far therein ere I discovered that we were deceived.

"Through Luther's writings I was led to see that transgressing the commandments of men can not be the cause of eternal death. By the illumination and grace of the Lord I increased in the knowledge of the Scriptures and was soon considered by a few, although undeservedly, an evangelical preacher.[4] Everyone spoke well of me, for I loved the world and the world loved me; yet it was said that I preached the Word of God and was a fine man."

Menno Simons does not inform us how he obtained Luther's books. About three or four years after he "entered the service of the Hierarchy" as a priest in Pingjum, the authorities of Friesland confiscated a number of Lutheran books which were found in the possession of the priests at Witmarsum. The account of the general treasurer of the Frisian government shows that between October 1, 1527 and September 30, 1528 a certain sum was paid to an officer of the law who had "opened the boxes belonging to the pastor and the vicar of Witmarsum and taken from them the books of Martinus Luther and others of his persuasion."[5]

The testimony of Menno quoted above makes it clear

[4] Menno does not refer to himself as an evangelical preacher at this time, as is said by S. Cramer, *R. E.*, vol. 13, p. 588, but clearly insists that this name was, in his instance, misapplied.

[5] *D. B.*, 1865, p. 112.

that it was in part through Luther's influence that he began to deviate from Roman Catholic doctrine. He was given, so he tells us, the name of an evangelical preacher. This name was generally applied to the priests who favored the Lutheran cause and preached to an extent the Lutheran doctrine although they may have continued in Roman worship and practice. As a rule the civil authorities who welcomed the endeavor for a reformation of the church permitted the preaching of the new doctrine for years before they consented to the introduction of new religious forms. The priests in these countries had liberty to preach Lutheran doctrine but not to introduce Lutheran worship. Those of the clergy who desired a reformation of the church and preached the new doctrine were willing to follow Luther's advice: To postpone the introduction of new religious forms until the civil authorities would permit such a change. This was at that time Menno Simons' position. He was in this period a representative of the state-church Reformation, or of the type of church reformation which, under the leadership of Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, consented to go hand in hand with the civil authorities and to continue in the practice of Roman Catholic worship until the state would permit the introduction of evangelical forms and scriptural worship. With joy Menno would have hailed the day of the abolition of Romanism by the state.

Both Luther and Zwingli, the leading state-church reformers, advised the priests in the states whose rulers favored their cause to continue in their office and say Mass "in appearance" until the governments of these states would decide to introduce the Reformation, establish the new creed and raise the new church to the position of the state-church. This principle has found classical expression in Luther's tract *A Faithful Admonition* published in January, 1522, in which the reformer advances the opinion that changes in worship and practice must not be made without the consent of the heads of the state. The secular authorities, he says, should take this matter into their hands, "every prince in his

own land," and nothing in the way of actual reformation of the church should be done without the initiative of the authorities or the command of the government. Luther says further:

"Therefore, look upon the government, as long as they do not undertake anything and do not give a command, you should keep quiet with hand, mouth and heart and should not concern yourself about it. If you can persuade the government to proceed and give a command, you may do so. If the government be not willing, neither should you be. But if you proceed, you are in the wrong and are far worse than the other party [the Romanists]."[6]

It is probably unnecessary to say here that in all countries of western Europe church and state were united and the Roman Catholic Church was the state church. Adherents of other creeds were not tolerated. But soon after the rise of the reformers Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli the governments of a few states of Germany and Switzerland permitted the preaching of non-Roman doctrine and somewhat later, namely in the year 1525, the government of these states discarded Roman worship and practice and established new state churches. In Menno Simons' fatherland, the Netherlands, the hope for a reformation of the church was largely entertained. The regent of the Netherlands, Mary of Burgund, formerly Queen of Hungary, the sister of Emperor Charles V., had the reputation of being a secret adherent of Luther;[7] the Pope himself brought an accusation to that effect against her.[8] Those who disapproved of Roman Catholic teaching were not persecuted in Friesland, as long as they were willing to retain the old religious forms. Not a few priests openly favored Lutheranism. For twenty years, namely from 1516 to 1536 Jelle (Gellius) Faber, the

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[6] *Erl. E.*, vol. 24, p. 49. Compare *American Journal of Theology*, April 1907, p. 310.

[7] Koestlin, *Martin Luther*, vol. 2, pp. 105, 224.

[8] *D. B.*, 1906, p. 21. Mary was made regent of the Netherlands in Summer of 1531.

pastor of Jelsum near Leeuwarden and later Menno's opponent, frequently preached Lutheran doctrine from the pulpit.[9] With many other priests in Germany and the Netherlands Menno continued in his office hoping for better days to come, when evangelical practice should be introduced with the consent of the civil authorities.

Menno Simons continues his narrative as follows:

"Afterwards it came to pass, before I had ever heard of the Brethren, that a God-fearing, pious man named Sikke Snyder was beheaded at Leeuwarden for the reason that he had been baptized. It sounded to me strange indeed to hear of a second baptism. I examined the Scriptures with diligence and earnest application but could find nothing concerning infant baptism."

Sikke Frerichs, a tailor by trade, was a Melchiorite (Covenanter). He was baptized at Embden in East Friesland, on December 10, 1530, by Jan Volkerts. His Martyrdom took place on March 20, 1531 at Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland.

"Having made this discovery [that there is no Scripture foundation for infant baptism]," Menno says further, "I repeatedly conversed on the subject with the priest who held the office of the pastor of Pingjum and after much discussion he had to admit that there is no Scriptural ground for infant baptism. Notwithstanding this I had not the courage to trust my own understanding but consulted several ancient authors. They taught me that children were to be washed by baptism from the original sin. I compared this with the Scriptures and found that it made baptism take the place of the blood of Christ.

"Then I consulted Luther, desiring to know his grounds for infant baptism. He taught me that infants should be baptized because of their own faith.[10] I perceived that this also was not in accordance with the Word of God. Thirdly,

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[9] De Groot, C. P. H., *Hundert Jahre aus der Geschichte d. Ref. i. d. Niederlanden*, p. 74.

[10] That infants have faith was the foremost argument advanced by Luther for infant baptism.

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I consulted Bucer.[11] He taught, infants should be baptized in order that they may be the more diligently instructed and brought up in the ways of the Lord. I saw that this also was without foundation. Then I consulted Bullinger[12] who directed me to the Old Covenant and circumcision. This, as well, I found incapable of being substantiated by Scripture."

"Having thus observed that the most noteworthy authors differed so greatly among themselves, each one following his own reason [instead of the Scriptures], I saw clearly that we were deceived with infant baptism."

It will be observed that Menno Simons in this account of his own renunciation of the Roman Church dwells on baptism more intently than on any other point of doctrine. The reason is obvious. At the time when he wrote this account Menno recognized the great importance of the Scriptural practice of believers' baptism. To reject infant baptism was to lay the ax to the root of the distinctive doctrines, as well as of the ecclesiastical order of the church in which Menno was born and held office. Neither Luther nor Zwingli questioned the validity of Roman Catholic sacraments and ordination. If infant baptism was unscriptural and invalid, the Lutheran and Zwinglian reformation of the Roman Church was clearly inadequate. If the sacraments and ordination of the Church of Rome were unacceptable, a mere reformation of that church along lines approved by the civil authorities was insufficient; a regeneration or renewing of the church along New Testament lines was in order. The restoration of Scriptural baptism was in fact the most fundamental requirement for a true New Testament church.

Through the study of the Scriptures, in consequence of reading Luther's writings and of hearing of Sikke Snyder's martyrdom, Menno Simons received light on various points of doctrine. He knew at that time of no denomination which was orthodox on these points, with which he could

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[11] Martin Bucer in Strasburg, was one of the leading Zwinglian reformers.

[12] Heinrich Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli at Zurich.

unite. To defy the world and step out in the light which he had received required nothing less than a thorough change of heart. To this Menno had not yet attained.

Menno writes further:

"Shortly after this [namely after having made the discovery that infant baptism is without scriptural foundation] I received a call to the village in which I was born, called Witmarsum, and from motives of covetousness and ambition I accepted the position [in 1531]. Here I spoke much concerning the Word of the Lord, but without spirit and love, as is the manner of all hypocrites; and by this means I made disciples of my own stamp, namely vain boasters [who desired to be called evangelical Christians although they observed the forms of Romanism], light-minded talkers who, alas! cared in fact little about these matters, as was also true of myself [who continued in the office of a priest notwithstanding my evangelical knowledge]. And although I could talk much of the Scriptures, I did not order my life in accordance with my knowledge, but led an impure, carnal, fruitless life in youthful lusts, seeking nothing but earthly gain, ease, the favor of men and a great name, as all generally do who take passage on the same ship."

In Pingjum Menno Simons had been a vicar; in Witmarsum he held the office of a pastor or parish priest which meant a considerable enhancement of his income.[13] In later years he looked back only with remorse to this time of inconsistency. One of his first books, viz. the *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm*, is largely a contrite confession of his sin in a period of his life when he professed to serve the Lord but was not willing to keep His word lest he be subjected to persecution. While retaining the office of a priest he probably attempted to ease his conscience by similar arguments as were advanced by the leaders of the state-church Reformation. Luther and Zwingli were of the opinion, as has been pointed out, that from motives of consideration for "the weak" who must not be offended, un-

[13] There is documentary proof to the effect that the income of the vicar of Pingjum was about sixty gold guilders, while the salary of the parish priest at Witmarsum amounted to about one hundred gold guilders. (Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 224).

scriptural religious forms may be observed for a time. When Menno speaks of his "impure life" it is not to be supposed that he has in mind offensive sin. He testifies to the contrary that he always led a strictly honorable, moral life in the eyes of men. In his *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm* he says:

"Relying upon grace I did all evil. I was as a carefully whitened sepulcher. Outwardly before men I was moral, chaste, generous; there was none that reproved my conduct; but inwardly I was full of dead men's bones. — On the outside my platter was clean but within it was full of extortion and excess." "I sought mine own ease and my praise more zealously than Thy righteousness, honor, truth, and Thy Word." (172; I:223. 168; I:217).

Menno relates farther:

"Afterwards rose the sect of Munster by whom many pious hearts in our village were deceived. My soul was in great sorrow for I perceived that they were zealous and yet erred in doctrine. I opposed them, as far as I was able, by preaching and exhortation. Twice I debated with their leaders, once in private and again in public. But my admonitions availed nothing because I myself did that which I well knew was not right. The report spread far abroad that I could readily silence them.[14] The people in general looked to me. I saw with mine eyes that I was the champion and refuge of the impenitent who all depended upon me."

"Afterwards the poor straying sheep who erred because they had no true shepherds, after many cruel edicts, after much killing and slaughter, came together at a place called the Old Cloister, near my place of residence and, sad to say, through the ungodly doctrines of Munster, contrary to the Spirit, word and example of Christ, drew the sword in self-defense, which the Lord commanded Peter to put up in the sheath."

The Munsterites advocated enthusiastic and revolutionary doctrines. Many were in a measure influenced by them who did not follow them on all points. Among these were the above mentioned "Oldcloisterites," as Menno speaks of them, who

[14] The insinuation of K. Vos (*Menno Simons*, p. 29) that this expression shows Menno to be "not a little conceited of his eloquence" is unacceptable. Menno's point is that even as a priest he had the reputation of being an opponent of the Munsterites.

differed from the Munsterites on various points, as will be shown in another place. They took the sword to defend their lives, entrenching themselves in the Old Cloister near Bolsward. The place was besieged by a contingent of troops and taken by storm on April 5, 1535.[15] Of the 300 inmates 130 fell in battle, the rest were nearly all executed. Among those who lost their lives was Menno's own brother. Some of these people had heard Menno's testimony against certain doctrines of Romanism. They had forsaken the national church, and somewhat later, contrary to his advice, had taken the sword. He attributed their errors to the fact that they were without true shepherds. Although they erred, they had the courage of their conviction, while he himself was yet connected with the state church, hoping for a time when unscriptural forms of worship and unevangelical ceremonies could be abandoned with the consent of the worldly authorities and when he himself would be better established in the truth und more sure of his ground.

Menno Simons continues his narration as follows:

"After this had transpired, the blood of these people, although they were deceived, became such a burden to me that I could not endure it nor find rest in my soul. I reflected upon my carnal, sinful life as well as on my hypocritical doctrine [testifying against Romanism, but as yet observing its forms] and idolatry which I daily practiced in appearance without satisfaction and against my own soul. I saw with my eyes that these zealous people willingly gave their lives and their possessions for their doctrine, although they were in error, while I who was one of those through whom they had in part been brought to a recognization of the popish evils — I continued in a life of ease and in the outward practice of known abominations, and this I did [not out of consideration for 'the weak,' but] only for the reason that I might live comfortably and shun the cross of the Lord."

Menno Simons says here that he "in appearance daily practiced idolatry." All the reformers held the Roman Catholic Mass to be idolatrous. According to the teaching of the Church of Rome to celebrate Mass is to repeat the great sacrifice of

[15] Not 1534, as stated in *Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. 7, p. 61, note.

Christ. In every Roman Catholic church the sacrifice of Calvary is supposed to be daily repeated in Mass. The bread and wine of the sacrament is believed to be Christ Himself who in the form of the bread and wine is offered anew by the priest to atone for the sins of the people. This together with prayer to the saints, etc., is spoken of by Menno as idolatry. In his *Meditation to the Twenty-fifth Psalm* he says:

"To a weak perishable creature which grew out of the earth, was broken in the mill, was baked at the fire and which I have bitten with my teeth and consumed by my stomach, namely to a bit of bread I have said, 'Thou hast redeemed me,' as Israel said to the golden calf, 'These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'" (171b; I: 222a).

But at the time when Menno was reputed to be "an evangelical preacher" he, as stated above, said Mass in appearance only. Apparently he was influenced by Luther on the point in question. Luther advised the priests of the countries whose rulers did not consent to abolishing Mass, to omit, in saying Mass, the passages which have reference to the sacrifice, in other words to celebrate Mass in appearance but not in fact. Mass being said in Latin, the people would not know the difference. Luther writes in his *Opinion Concerning both Kinds of the Sacrament,"* in April 1522:

"In the second place the priests who say Mass must omit the words which treat of the sacrifice. And to omit this is not a thing that may be left to any one's judgment, but those words must not be used, even if some people were offended by the omission. But it is not a difficult matter for the priest to avoid those words without the common people ever knowing it; it may be done without offense."[10]

While this was Luther's advice to the priests of Saxony and Hesse at that time, he held that in their teaching and sermons they should vindicate evangelical truth. This was apparently also the position of Menno Simons.

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[10] *Erl. E.*, vol. 28, p. 304.

"Thus reflecting upon these things," Menno says further, "my soul was so grieved that I could no longer endure it. I thought to myself, I, miserable man, what do I? If I continue in this way and do not follow the Word of the Lord; if I, to the best of my limited ability, do not rebuke the hypocrisy of the theologians, the impenitent, carnal life and the perverted baptism, Lord's supper and false worship of God; if I through fear of the flesh do not set forth the true principles of the truth, neither do what is in my power to direct the wandering sheep, who so gladly would do the right if they had the knowledge, to the true pasture of Christ—Oh how shall their shed blood rise against me at the judgment of the Almighty and pronounce sentence against my poor soul."

Under the marginal title, "My Change of Heart," Menno continues:

"My heart trembled in my body. I prayed to God with sighs and tears that He would give to me, a troubled sinner, the gift of His grace and create a clean heart in me, that through the merits of the crimson blood of Christ, He would graciously forgive my unclean walk and ease seeking life,[17] and bestow upon me wisdom, Spirit, candor, and courage, that I might preach His exalted and adorable name and Holy Word unadulterated and make manifest His truth to His praise.

"In consequence, I began in the name of the Lord to preach publicly from the pulpit the word of true repentance, to direct the people unto the narrow path and with the power of the Scriptures to reprove all sin and ungodliness, all idolatry and false worship, and to testify to the true worship, also baptism and the Lord's supper according to the teaching of Christ, to the extent that I at that time had received grace from God. I also faithfully warned every one of the Munsterite abominations,[18] viz., king, polygamy, earthly kingdom, the sword, etc.,

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[17] The assertion that Menno's conversion "has nothing to do with accepting God's grace in Christ in consequence of conviction of sin and repentance" (*R. E.* vol. 13, p. 589) is quite unfounded.

[18] Menno wrote his tract against the Munsterites previous to his renunciation of the Roman Catholic Church and it is quite possible that he thus attracted the attention of the people with whom he afterwards identified himself. It is doubtful whether this treatise was printed before a much later date. At first it seems to have been circulated in manuscript.

until after about nine months [i. e., in the month of January of the year 1536] when the gracious Lord granted me His fatherly Spirit, aid, power and help, that I voluntarily forsook my good name, honor and reputation which I had among men and renounced all the abominations of Antichrist, Mass, infant baptism and my unprofitable life, and willingly submitted to homelessness and poverty under the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ; in my weakness I feared God, sought out the pious and, although they were few in number, I found some who had a commendable zeal and maintained the truth.

"Behold thus, my reader, the God of mercy, through His abounding grace which He bestowed upon me, a miserable sinner, has first touched my heart, given me a new mind, humbled me in His fear, taught me in part to know myself, turned me from the way of death and graciously called me into the narrow path of life, into the communion of His saints. To Him be praise forevermore. Amen."

Menno Simons renounced Romanism in the month of January, 1536, the date is probably January 30, a Sunday.[19] He was "a lord and prince in Babel," and, as he himself says, "voluntarily, from my own choice"[20] he forsook his position in the world. To do what he perceived to be his duty and to follow the word of his Lord meant nothing less than to lay all on the altar.

In his *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm* Menno describes the consequences of his conversion as concerns the changed attitude of the world toward him. In connection with verse 9 ("He will guide the distressed in right paths and will teach the distressed his way," Dutch translation) he says:

"O Lord, Thy divine grace has shone around me, Thy word has taught me, Thy Holy Spirit has influenced me till I forsook the counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners and the seat of the scornful. I was ungodly and carried the banner of unrighteousness for many years. The first one was I in all manner of folly, idle words and vanity; playing, drinking, eating to excess were my daily pastime. The fear of God was not before my eyes. Besides I had become a lord and prince in Babel;

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[19] Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 166 seq.

[20] *Meditation to the 25th Psalm*, 1539 fol. C6b; compare A7a.

every one sought and desired me; the world loved me and I the world. — My words prevailed in all things; the desire of my heart was granted. But as soon as I, with Solomon, saw that all was vanity and, with Paul, esteemed all as nothing, when I renounced the haughty, godless life of this world and sought Thee and Thy kingdom which will abide forever, I have found everywhere the counterpart and reverse. Before I was honored, now I am dishonored; before all was love, now hatred; before I was a friend, now an enemy, before wise, now foolish, before pious, now wicked, before a Christian, now a heretic; yea, an abomination and an evil-doer I have become to all." (168a; I:218b).

"As long as I served the world, the world rewarded me well. — But now I am hated of the world in such measure that not only I but also those who show me love, must be subject to the danger of apprehension and death. Am I not regarded more evil than a thief and a murderer? Am I not in the wilderness of this blind world as a lonely sheep which on all sides is threatened by ravenous wolves?

"O Lord, my enemies are powerful and great. My flesh does not have rest before them. — I know not whither to turn, but I say with Jehoshaphat, the king, We lift up our eyes unto Thee, and our help is from Thee alone. I depend on Thy grace alone, as Abraham in Gerar, Jacob in Mesopotamia, etc.; yea all the pious fathers have hoped in Thee and were assured that all who trust in Thee shall not be made ashamed."[21]

It has been repeatedly asserted, since Menno remained in the national church for some time against better knowledge, that compared with the great state-church reformers, above all Luther, he was lacking in resolution and courage. But did it ever become necessary for any one of these reformers to lay down his position of honor among men and become a fugitive, one of a people who were put to death as the catch polls found it possible to apprehend them? Was not Menno following the advice of one of the foremost of these reformers when he remained in office, saying Mass "in appearance" and waiting for the time when the unscriptural ceremonies might be abandoned by the order or consent of the heads of the state? Luther as

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[21] *Meditation*, etc., fol. C5b and A4a.

well as Zwingli did not forsake the Roman Catholic Church, but reformed it. They were willing to retain the unevangelical forms until the state ordered their abolishment. In the matter of the reformation of the church they took only such steps as would meet the approval of the state. Thus they enjoyed the protection of the state and were never subjected to persecution.[22] Menno Simons on the other hand united with a people who had been summarily condemned to death in the Netherlands as well as in the German Empire.

Menno was baptized by Obbe Philips. Presumably his baptism closely followed his renunciation of the national church. He testifies in later years that he found it difficult to accept the doctrine of the Incarnation as advocated by the church with which he united. For weeks and months he was in great perplexity, finding it impossible to recognize this doctrine as orthodox. Probably this was previous to his renunciation of the national church (it was previous in part, at any rate, to his baptism, as he expressly states), and had a tendency to make it the more difficult to decide upon forsaking that church.

Obbe Philips by whom Menno Simons was baptized was the principal leader in the denomination named after him — the Obbenites — with whom Menno Simons identified himself. They were the Netherlandish wing of the great Anabaptist party afterwards named Mennonites by their opponents. In South Germany and Switzerland the Anabaptists were known by the name of the Swiss Brethren. The Obbenites and Swiss Brethren agreed virtually in doctrine and principle although there were some differences as will be pointed out. At the time of Menno's conversion the Obbenites had existed only a short time and were few in number while the Swiss Brethren were far stronger numerically and had even then a great and interesting history.

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[22] Martin Luther was protected by the Saxon government. His sovereigns, the rulers of Saxony, were his friends and patrons. The emperor's attempts to compel the government of Saxony to silence Luther proved a failure.

II

MENNO SIMONS' CALL TO THE MINISTRY AND ORDINATION

Menno Simons renounced the national church on January 30, 1536. He seems to have left Witmarsum about the same time. At the place where he was so well known and where his conversion caused not a little stir, he felt doubtless the least secure. In the autumn of the same year two men, Herman and Gerrit Janz, whose dwelling place is not known, were arrested in Friesland on the charge that they had "given lodging to the former priest, Menno Simons, until recently of Witmarsum, who has now been received into the covenant of the Anabaptists." The regent of the province of Friesland expressed himself on Oct. 24, 1536, to the effect that the sentence of death should be passed on these two men, although obviously they had not been baptized. They were set at liberty, however, probably for the reason that Menno was not yet baptized when they permitted him to enter their house.[1]

Toward the end of the same year we find Menno in the province of Groningen, just east of Friesland. Here he was ordained a minister of the Gospel by Obbe Philips. Menno himself gives a detailed account of his call to the ministry of the Word of God. His narration was written as a reply to various accusations by Gellius Faber who asserted that he had never been properly called and was seeking selfish ends in the ministry; hence Menno enlarges particularly on points showing the fallacy of these charges. He says:

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[1] *D. B.*, 1864, p. 135. On the supposition that Menno's wife was a daughter of Herman Janz see Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 5.

"About a year after this, [namely after his renunciation of the state church] while I in quietness exercised myself in the Word of God by reading and writing, it came to pass that seven or eight persons came to me, who were of one heart and one soul with me, in their faith and life, as far as man can judge unblamable, separated from the world according to the testimony of the Scriptures and willing to bear the cross;[2] who had a sincere aversion not only to the Munsterites but to all other worldly sects, false teachings and abominations. In the name of the God-fearing ones who were of one mind and spirit both with them and with myself, they entreated me kindly and earnestly to take to heart the very sad condition of the poor, oppressed souls and use to advantage the talent which I had unmeritedly received from the Lord; for the hunger was great and the faithful stewards very few.

"When I heard this, my heart was greatly troubled. Apprehension and fear was on every side. For on the one hand I saw my limited talents, my great lack of knowledge, the weakness of my nature, the timidity of my flesh, the very great wickedness, wantonness, perversity and tyranny of the world, the mighty great sects [the persecuting state churches], the subtlety of many men and the indescribably heavy cross which, if I began to preach, would be the more felt; and on the other hand I recognized the pitifully great hunger, want and need of the God-fearing, pious souls, for I saw plainly that they erred as innocent sheep which have no shepherd."

The class which Menno Simons rightly describes as sheep without shepherds were those who, through Lutheran, Zwinglian, Melchiorite, and Anabaptist influences had been religiously awakened and brought to recognize to a greater or less degree the errors of Romanism. The Lutheran and Zwinglian preachers, as a rule, had left the land after the beginning of bloody persecution, and those who remained followed the policy of avoiding everything that would bring them into difficulty with the authorities. This was also the position of the Melchiorites. Many pious people were waiting for spiritual leadership. Many

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[2] The Melchiorites evaded the cross and remained in the national church, but those with whom Menno Simons identified himself were of a different mind. Obbe Philips was presumably among those who came to Menno.

who had become estranged from the national church were, like the "Oldcloisterites," to some extent influenced by the Munsterites, but never thought of accepting Munsterite doctrine as a whole. Menno saw the field ripe unto harvest. He felt that those who would be shepherds of the erring sheep must be men who were sure of their message, men who were not only ready to give their life for the truth, but to live as fugitives and outcasts under the greatest hardships, privations and dangers.

"After much entreaty," says Menno Simons further, "I finally surrendered myself to the Lord and His church on this condition that they and myself should for a time continue in earnest prayer, if it were His good and holy will that I should or could thus serve Him to His glory, that He in fatherly love grant unto me a heart and mind which would testify to me, with Paul: 'Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel;' or if it were not His will, that He might lead in a way that it should be left undone; for Christ says: 'If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. 18:19, 20).

"When the persons before mentioned did not desist from their entreaties, and my own conscience made me uneasy in view of the great hunger and need already spoken of, I consecrated myself, soul and body to the Lord, and committed myself to His gracious leading, and I began in due time [i. e., after having been ordained to the ministry of the Word] according to His holy Word to teach and to baptize, to labor with my limited talents in the harvest field of the Lord, to assist in building up His holy city and temple and to repair the dilapidated walls."[8]

The main sources of information concerning the principles of the Obbenites are, besides Obbe Philips' *Confessions*, the early writings of Menno Simons. There is good evidence to show that almost from the time of his ordination Menno Si-

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[8] The part of Menno's answer to Gellius Faber containing the here quoted account of his own conversion and renunciation of the Roman Church has often been reprinted in Dutch, German, and English. In the English Works it is found part 1, pp. 3-7; it is omitted in the reply to Faber, part 2, page 99.

mons' influence among the Obbenites was second to that of no other leader. Through his able presentation and defense of the principles for which they stood, Menno became the spokesman of the denomination. He testifies that at the time when he united with them they were unblamable in doctrine and life. Obviously this testimony meant that they were willing to accept any truth which might come to them from the Word. The Obbenites were fully decided to be guided by God's word alone and to accept and follow its teachings. "Historical development" they recognized only in so far as it is founded on Scripture. According to their own testimony they welcomed new truth from the Scriptures. It is clear from his writings that Menno Simons devoted himself to diligent study, fully recognizing the probability of obtaining new truth from the Word. His writings, even at this early period show a surprisingly thorough acquaintance with the Scriptures.

Soon after his call to the ministry Menno wrote the *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm* in which he gives us a glimpse of his inner life, motives and endeavors. That this book was written not long after his renunciation of the national church is evident from the statement found in it that he served the enemy of the Lord "until this present time." Nevertheless it is clear from other statements that his ordination preceded the writing of this book.[5] Hence the date of the book is probably toward the end of 1536 or early in the year following.

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[4] The title of the edition of this book which was printed in 1539 is *Voele goede und Chrystelycke leringhen op den 25. Psalm doer Menno Simons in een Maniere van bidden gescreuen.* 1539.

[5] "Tot nu toe" i. e. "until now," says Menno, he has not served the Lord (fol. A3a). In his *Complete Works* the *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm* is not found in its original form; it was revised by himself at a later date and the words in question were eliminated. The oldest edition extant alone, namely that of 1539, has these words. This is supposed to be the first edition but the book was written before 1539. Menno had been "ordained a minister of the holy word" at the time when he wrote this book, as he states fol. C5b and in other instances.

In this book Menno declares his desire and anxiousness to accept all truth which may come to him and his brethren from the Scriptures.

"From our whole heart we seek for and strive after the purity of the primitive church." "It is not necessary to use the sword against me, for if I have not the truth of Jesus Christ, I shall gladly be taught it. — I say again, with the sword of the divine Word I desire to prevail or be prevailed over. Herewith I offer anywheresoever to confer, to teach, to discuss, as may be desired."[6] "If I had not the Word of Jesus Christ, I desired from my whole heart to be taught, for I seek it with great fear and trembling. In this I cannot be deceived. I have believed and accepted Thy holy word through Thy holy Spirit, as the sure word of Thy truth, and it will not deceive me."[7]

In the first edition of his *Foundation of the Christian Doctrine* Menno says:

"We desire only so much mercy that we may be permitted to confer and discuss publicly with any theologians, as may be your pleasure. For if they have the truth of God, and not we, we shall gladly be taught it." "Let us publicly discuss and confer seeking nothing but only that the divine word and true Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ may be elucidated and that we may live according to it. O how much innocent blood could be spared if you would consent to this and in how short a time would the truth be made known to many." "Therefore lay our doctrine against your doctrine, our life against your life, our way against your way, our cross against your cross. If ye then find that your doctrine, life, way and cross conform to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, instruct us with the Word of the Lord, which is the only authority for the faith; we should so willingly be taught. But now the bloody, evil schoolmaster alone who certainly can not teach faith, namely your terrible sword, must prevail in these matters."[8]

"I desire," he says further in the same book, "that men whoever they may be, may through my life and service be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth. For this cause have

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[6] *Meditation*, etc., fol. A2.

[7] The same, fol. C7a.

[8] *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers*, 1539, fol. C3b, L7b, P5b.

I forsaken all carnal ease and glory and have submitted myself to the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, seeking nothing that is of this world. — For I desire from my heart and seek with all diligence to live according to the Gospel and will of Him who died and arose for me."[9]

Menno concludes his *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm,* after describing the desolation wrought by Antichrist, with the following prayer based on the last verse of the twenty-fifth Psalm:

"Redeem Israel, O God, out of his trouble. Look with the eye of Thy mercy upon our great oppression and distress; release us from the iron furnace of Egypt; bring us out of the land of the Chaldees. Let the holy city be builded again upon its old foundation, with the walls and gates. Rebuild the fallen temple whose stones are scattered and trampled upon in all the streets. Gather together Thy wandering sheep. Receive Thy returning bride who has behaved so perversely with strange lovers. O God of Israel, create in us a pure heart which longeth for Thy blessed Word and will. Send forth faithful laborers into Thy harvest to reap and gather the grain in due season. Send us faithful builders who lay for us a good foundation, that in the last days Thy house may be established and shine in beauty over all the hills; that many may come thither and say: Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to he house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways and we will walk in his paths (Isa. 2:3); that we in peace and freedom of conscience may walk before Thee all the days of our lives under God-fearing governments and blameless teachers, with the Christian baptism, true supper, godly life and proper discipline, that Thou mayest in us as Thy beloved children be truly honored and praised eternally through Thy blessed Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom with Thee, Father, and Thy holy Spirit be honor and everlasting dominion. Amen." (176b; I: 228b).

It is interesting to notice that Menno Simons in his first writings denounces the opinion held by the Melchiorites, Caspar Schwenckfeld and others: That before a church should be organized and the ordinances of Christ observed a great change in political and ecclesiastical conditions must take place. He combats the opinion of a *stillstand* and points out that the time

[9] The same, N4b.

of grace is now and a more convenient season to serve the Lord must not be waited for. He says in the *Foundation:*

"O dear brethren, do not comfort yourselves with the idle consolation and the groundless hope that the word of Jesus Christ shall yet be taught and lived without cross-bearing. Had all the children of God waited for such a time, the Gospel of the kingdom would not have been proclaimed from the beginning until now, O no, brethren, no; the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the word of God is to be sealed with blood and proved by persecution. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Not only has He suffered in His members but by the cross He obtained the glory which He had laid down. If now the Head has in the flesh born such pain, persecution and affliction, how then shall the members expect to have ease and quietness in the flesh? If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? (Matt. 10:25). For all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, says Paul, shall suffer persecution. Ye shall be hated, says Christ, by all men for my name's sake.

"My dear brethren, take such evil thoughts out of your carnal hearts and do not give ear to the thoughts of another time that ye may not be deceived by this false hope. I have indeed known many who entertained this hope, but they have not lived to see the realization of it.[10] — If ye have any knowledge of Christ, any love for His holy word, do not console yourselves longer with such a false hope. If it should be that the merciful God will give some quietness and peace and liberty, we shall receive it with thanksgiving from His gracious hand; if not, His name shall nevertheless be praised in eternity. We know that the time is at hand, as has been set forth above; we have now the acceptable time of all grace, the day of salvation."[11]

One of the cardinal points on which Menno differed from both Catholicism and Lutheranism is also emphasized in one of his first books. He says:

"There is no medium against sin besides the precious blood of Jesus Christ; neither works nor merits, neither baptism or supper (although I know well that the true Christians use these signs in obedience to the divine word) otherwise that which we

[10] In the revision of this book Menno changed this sentence. He says here, "I have known some," etc.

[11] The same, fol. A6b.

obtain through the merits of Christ is ascribed and given to elements and creatures. The Christian ordinances are signs of obedience through which our faith is exercised." — "We find that the new birth is brought about through God's word (Rom. 10:14; I Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18; I Pet. 1:23)"[12]

Menno Simons, in the account of his conversion and call to the ministry of the Word of God does not dwell on his ordination nor make mention of the one who ordained him. The reason for this silence is obvious. At the time when Menno wrote his reply to Gellius Faber in which this account is contained, Obbe Philips had forsaken the Church, and this fact was set forth in Gellius Faber's book. Hence Menno preferred not to mention the name of Obbe Philips when speaking of his call to the ministry. It was a bitter experience for him that Obbe turned back and "became a Demas" (II Tim. 4:10) as he speaks of him.[13]

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[12] *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm,* 1539, fol. C4b and E8a.

[13] 312a; II:96a. That Obbe Philips again united with the Roman Catholic Church, as has been frequently asserted, is an evident error.

III

THE ANABAPTISTS

In the period of the Reformation a few Christian denominations defended and practiced the baptism of believers on the confession of faith. They were by their opponents called Anabaptists (rebaptizers) because they did not recognize infant baptism as valid and rebaptized those who had been "christened" in their infancy. Other denominations maintained the practice of infant baptism and were sometimes called infant baptists. Neither those who were generally named Anabaptists, nor the infant baptists represented a distinct class or party. All infant baptist denominations of the Reformation period, however, approved of or consented to state-churchism, the union of church and state, while those who are generally classed as Anabaptists with the exception of the Munsterites, Batenburgers and Davidians were persistent opponents of state-churchism.

The prevailing differences among the various infant baptist denominations are patent. Martin Luther held that the points on which the Zwinglian system differed from his own were of such fundamental importance that the Zwinglians must be considered to be without the fold of the general Christian church and could not be accorded the Christian name. And again Luther denounced as Antichrist the one whom the most prominent infant baptist church acknowledged as its rightful head.

As for the various parties known as Anabaptists Menno Simons says correctly that the differences among them were even greater and more radical than those which separated the infant baptist parties from each other. Menno Simons was more severe and outspoken in his opposition to certain parties

known as Anabaptists than to the great state churches. He held Martin Luther personally in high esteem, while the leaders of certain Anabaptist sects were denounced by him as seducers, false prophets, and blasphemers.

The enthusiastic and revolutionary Anabaptists who did not reject the principle of state-churchism have a short history. The Munsterites and Batenburgers took the sword and perished with the sword. The former rose in 1533 and their cause failed utterly in 1535, when the city of Munster was conquered. The Munsterite principles were for a time advocated by the Batenburgers, but their principal leader, Jan of Batenburg, was executed within a few years. The Davidians, i. e. the followers of David Joris, adhered to Munsterite principles but eliminated the revolutionary tendencies of their predecessors. David Joris formally united with the Zwinglian state church at Basel. Only secretly he adhered to his enthusiastic notions. The theory that these "corrupt sects," as Menno Simons designates them, advocated virtually the same doctrines as the great Anabaptist denominations (namely, the Swiss Brethren, Huterites, and Mennonites) is quite unfounded. The Munsterites in fact obviously compromised the question of baptism. They did not consider baptism of sufficient importance to be willing to suffer persecution on account of it. And after the establishment of a state church in Munster people were driven to baptism at the point of the sword; it is therefore not correct to say that the Munsterites stood for believers' baptism in the true sense. John of Leyden, their foremost leader, recanted at last his belief in the necessity of adult baptism. The Batenburgers and Davidians did not practice the baptism of adults although they have usually been considered Anabaptists.

Not a few historical works describe the history of the Anabaptists in a way giving most prominence to the tale of the Munsterites and leaving the reader under the impression that John of Leyden was the principal representative of Anabaptism. Says Abraham Kuijper in his *Lectures on Calvinisms:* "The Anabaptist standpoint was that the circle of baptized believers

was in duty bound to take all civil life under its guardianship and remodel it; and so John of Leyden violently established his shameless power as king of the new Zion."[1] Other writers have expressed themselves to the same effect. It is quite true that this was the position of John of Leyden and the Munsterites, but that the Anabaptists in general shared in such views is an obvious error. That the church should take all civil life under its guardianship and remodel it, or in other words, that the church and state should be united, was considered by the great Anabaptist denominations to be an unbearable mistake. On this point — the union of Church and State — John of Leyden differed radically from the Anabaptists.

The popular view that Menno Simons was the reformer of those of whom he speaks as the corrupt sects, and that the modern Anabaptists are the spiritual children of the remnants of the Munsterites who through Menno were led to discard their errors, will not bear investigation. The Obbenites with whom Menno Simons identified himself existed contemporaneously with the Munsterites. And it must be remembered that the most distinguished period of Anabaptist history had already passed at the time of the rise of the Munsterites. The first congregation of the Swiss Brethren was organized in 1525 at Zurich in Switzerland. From here the Anabaptist movement within a few years spread over a large territory. Many churches were founded notwithstanding the bloodiest persecution. Thousands, including the most prominent leaders, were put to death in Catholic, Zwinglian and Lutheran countries. The blood of the martyrs proved to be the seed of the church. In intensity and strength the Anabaptist movement in these earlier years exceeded by far the Lutheran and Zwinglian movements. With fire and sword through an unprecedented persecution the movement was finally checked, but the great denominations of

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[1] Kuijper, *Calvinism, Six Lectures*, p. 32. Similarly George Park Fisher (*The Reformation*, 1906, p. 400) says: "Another of the Anabaptists' tenets was the belief in the visible kingdom of Christ which was to be erected on the ruins of Church and State."

the Swiss Brethren and the Huterites maintained themselves through all persecution. They were not in the least influenced by the fanatics who were responsible for the developments at Munster. In the North the Obbenites staunchly opposed the Munsterites.

At an early date the Brethren of the Netherlands and North Germany were named after Menno Simons although it was well known that Menno was not their founder. Later the Brethren of Switzerland and South Germany (the Swiss Brethren) were given the same name. Menno never came to the South. He wrote in a language which was hardly intelligible to the Swiss and South Germans. The Swiss Brethren held the same teachings prior to the conversion of Menno Simons as in later periods. We are not left in the dark, but have reliable sources of information concerning their principles. In 1532 — prior to the rise of the Munsterites and prior also to the conversion of Menno Simons — a great discussion lasting ten days was held at Zofingen in the canton of Berne, Switzerland, between the Swiss Brethren and the Zwinglians. The protocol of these discussions was published in the same year, making a book of 308 pages which gives us thorough information concerning the doctrinal position of the early Swiss Brethren. In 1538 another great debate was held in Berne. The minutes of this debate are preserved in the state archives at Berne. It is a comprehensive document and proves conclusively that the Swiss Brethren were free from Munsterite tenets. Concerning Melchior Hofmann (who held various unsound opinions and is in a measure responsible for Munsterite enthusiasm although he was a far more respectable character than the Munsterite leaders) the Brethren said in the discussion at Berne: "Hofmann is not named a brother by us, but we oppose him with all earnestness, and consider his opinion, as we have heard it from himself and others of his party, an error."[2] These facts show the fallacy of the view that the people who were later called after Menno represented a reformation of the Munsterite sect.

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[2] *Acta Des Gespraechs* .... 1538; fol. 59.

We have said above that the most radical differences prevailed between some of the various parties commonly known as Anabaptists. But since only the great Anabaptist denominations survived the persecutions while, as already said, the various fanatical Anabaptist sects have a short history and represented a lost cause, many historians, even outside of the ranks of the Mennonites and Baptists, when they speak of the Anabaptists in general, have in mind the great Anabaptist denominations and other evangelical Anabaptists. The fact is recognized that these denominations, notwithstanding the prevailing differences, constituted virtually one party, which must not be confused with the Munsterites and their kin. Many writers in various centuries speak of the Anabaptists in a way which obviously excludes the Munsterites.

Johannes Kessler, the contemporaneous Zwinglian chronicler of St. Gall, Switzerland, writes: "Their walk and conversation shone; it was quite pious, holy and unblamable. — They die gladly and valiantly for the name of Christ, although they are tainted with some error."[3] Heinrich Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli in Zurich says: "They led their lives under a semblance of a very spiritual conduct; they reproved earnestly covetousness, pride, profanity, the lewd conversation and debauchery of the world, drinking and gluttony, and said much of mortifying the old man; in short," Bullinger adds, "the hypocrisy was great and manifold."[4]

Berchthold Haller, the Zwinglian reformer of Berne, wrote on September 12, 1532, to Bullinger: "They guard themselves of vices and take a strict attitude against them. They come often together and abide strictly by their rules, etc. And thus they make an impression upon the common people."[5] In other instances also Haller testifies that they avoid sin and vice, while the membership of the national church including even some of those in authority, is quite lukewarm in these matters. "To the

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[3] Kessler, *Sabbata*, ed. by E. Egli and R. Schoch, pp. 147, 284.

[4] Bullinger, *Der Widertauffer ursprung*, pp. 15b, 10a.

[5] Ottius, *Annales Anabaptistici*; p. 55.

Council I have pointed out the cause of this evil," says Haller, "namely, that many a preacher is more intent on serving his own belly than on doing his duty."[6] To Martin Bucer, Haller wrote on August 24, 1534: We realize ..... that the best and most upright people are seduced by the Anabaptists."[7]

"I confess openly," wrote Wolfgang Capito, "that in most Anabaptists piety and true zeal are in evidence. For what earthly advantage could they hope to win through banishment, torture, and terrible executions? Before God I testify that I can not say that they give their lives because of blindness, but rather from godly motives. You cannot notice in them any passion or excitement. No; with calmness and astonishing patience they go to their death as confessors of the Christian name."[8] "Among the Anabaptists," he writes, September 13, 1528, to Ambrosius Blaurer, "I have found good and pious souls, who through mildness might be won back to the fold of Christ."

The Zwinglian preachers of the Canton of Berne, assembled in Zofingen in 1532, wrote to the Council in Berne: Since the Anabaptists have a semblance of outward piety far more than we and all the churches which with us confess Jesus Christ, and since they avoid offensive vices which are common among us, therefore we ask," etc.[9] Joachim Vadian, the reformer of St. Gall, testifies: "None were at that time more inclined toward Anabaptism, and entangled with it, than those who were of a pious and upright disposition."[10] In the discussion of Zofingen, 1532, the Zwinglian preachers asserted that the pious were in particular susceptible to Anabaptist influences.[11]

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[6] Strasser, *Der schweizerische Anabaptismus zur Zeit der Reformation*, p. 234.

[7] Ottius, *Annales Anabaptistici*, p. 55; De Quervain, *Kirchliche und soziale Zustaende in Bern*, etc., p. 139.

[8] Cornelius, *Muenst. Aufr.*, part 2, p. 56.

[9] McGlothlin *Die Berner Taufer vor* 1532, p. 36.

[10] Vadian, *Deutsche historische Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 408.

[11] *Handlung oder Acta gehaltner Disputation und Gespraech zu Zoffingen*, 1532, p. 19a, 37b. Compare *Acta Des Gespraechs*..1538, fol. 29.

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Christoph Andreas Fischer, the priest of Feldsberg in Austria, wrote in 1603, in his book *Of the Cursed Beginnings of the Anabaptists:*

"Among all the heresies and sects .... which has ever had a more beautiful appearance and greater outward holiness than the Anabaptists? Other sects, as for example the Calvinists, Lutherans and Zwinglians are for the most part seditious, cruel and given to carnal indulgences. Not so the Anabaptists. They call each other brethren and sisters, they use no profanity nor harsh speech, they do not swear, they do not use weapons and in the beginning they did not even carry knives. They are not intemperate in eating and drinking, they do not wear apparel which indicates worldly show. They do not go to law before the magistrates; they bear everything in patience, as they pretend, and in the Holy Ghost. Who would believe that under this sheeps clothing are hiding only ravenous wolves!"[12]

Another Catholic theologian in 1582 wrote a book, *Against the Terrible Errors of the Anabaptists.* He says:

"Among the various existing sects there is none which in outward appearance leads a more modest, better, or more pious life than the Anabaptists. — As concerns the outward and public life they are very honest; no lying, deception, swearing, strife, scolding, no intemperate eating and drinking, no ostentation is found and discernable among them; but humility, patience, faithfulness, meekness, truth, temperance, and uprightness in such manner that one would suppose that they had the Holy Spirit of God." Nevertheless this author is of the opinion that there was no more abominable sect than theirs."[13]

Emil Egli, in his book on the Anabaptists of St. Gall, says: "That their success had its basis in a capable moral endeavor, could not be denied."[14] Paul Tschackert, in his work on the origin of the Lutheran and Zwinglian doctrine, speaks of the Anabaptists as "a voluntary union of Christians for the purpose of exercising the Christian spirit in the love of the brethren."[15]

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[12] Fischer, *Von der Widertauffer Verfluchtem Ursprung,* fol. A2b.

[13] Quoted by Loserth, *Communismus d. machr. Wiedertaeufer,* p. 90; Rembert, *Wiedert. i. Herzgt. Juelich,* p. 564.

[14] Egli, *Die St. Galler Taeufer,* p. 28; compare Egli, *Die Zuricher Wiedertaeufer,* p. 94.

[15] Tschackert, *Die Entwicklung der lutherischen und reformierten Kirchenlehre,* p. 133.

"In the instance of many of their opinions and principles, these people were in part wrong only in so far as they came three hundred years in advance of their age," says Johann Wilhelm Baum.[16]

Alfred Hegler speaks of the high ideals of the Anabaptists: "Their opposition to all Christianity which had been created by the earthly powers that be, their opposition to all persecution in the matter of faith, the demand for personal holiness, and the real adoption of religious thoughts."[17] K. W. H. Hochhuth points out that they insisted on the restoration of the primitive Christian life. Gustav Bossert says: "In their religious life they laid weight, not on sublime mysteries, but on striving after holiness."[18] Johann Loserth testifies that they undertook "to restore the unadultered original Christianity."[19] C. A. Cornelius and others have expressed themselves to the same effect. "They led for the most part a strict life," says Johann Conrad Fuessli, "and gave evidences of uncommon piety, as Bullinger himself testifies concerning them."[20]

"They aimed to organize a Church of consecrated people," writes Abraham Hulshof, "an assembly of Christians who were in real earnest to carry out the requirements of the Gospel. Of those who believed and who were truly converted they endeavored to constitute a living Church of Christ in the midst of the world — a church which, separated from the world, would follow Christ in brotherly unison."[21]

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[16] Baum, *Capito u. Bucer,* p. 371

[17] Hegler, *Geist und Schrift bei Sebastian Franck,* p. 3. Compare also Mueller, *Bernische Taeufer,* p. 2.

[18] *Blaetter f. Wuertt. Kirchengeschichte,* 1897, p. 113.

[19] Loserth, *Die Wiedertaufe in Niederoesterreich,* etc., p. 418.

[20] Fuessli, *Beitraege,* vol. 3, p. 314.

[21] Hulshof, *Geschiedenis van de Doopsgezinden te Straatsburg,* p. 245.

IV

MENNO SIMONS' MOTIVES, AIMS, AND ENDEAVORS

His Own Testimony.

Note. — The numbers given after quotations from Menno Simons' writings throughout the present book refer to his works, the first reference being to the Folio Edition and the second to the English Works. For example, in the first quotation on this page the numbers 449; II:249 mean that the reference is to page 449 of the Folio Edition of Menno Simons' Works, printed in 1681, and to part 2, page 249 of the English *Complete Works of Menno Simons*, Elkhart, Indiana, 1871 (a=column 1; b=col. 2). In every instance the Dutch original has been followed in preference to the English translation. When the quotations are taken from the original editions in the "Eastern" and Dutch languages in which Menno wrote, the references are given in the notes.

"I seek and desire from my heart nothing (this He knows who knows all things) but that the glorious name, the divine will and the praise of our Lord Jesus Christ may be made known throughout the world." (449; II:249a).

"And although our persecutors say that we withdraw from them out of pure wantonness and obstinacy, it is before God who knows the hearts of all, false and unjust. For our separation [from the national churches] has no other cause or motive than that in our great weakness we desire with all our heart to be guided by God's word and commandment." (153; I:203).

"We seek and desire only that we might point the whole world (which lieth in wickedness) to the true way, and that

many souls may by the Word of the Lord, through His help and power, be won from the dominion of Satan and brought to Christ." (498; II:302).

"I strive after nothing but that the God of heaven and earth, through His blessed Son Jesus Christ may have the glory through His blessed word; that all men may be saved, and that they may awaken in this acceptable time of grace from their deep sleep of sin; that they may lay aside their besetting sins and the damnable works of darkness and put on the armor of light; that they with us by true penitence, true faith, true baptism, the true supper, the true ban or discipline, true love, true obedience and consistent life may become a holy Christian church, the assembly and body of Christ." (522; II:328).

"My only purpose is this that I may be heir of heaven and many others with me. It is therefore unnecessary to use the sword against me. For if I have not the truth, I desire with all my heart to be taught it, as already said. — Again I say: With the Spirit and Word of Christ I desire to overcome or to be overcome. This is my only appeal. But contrary to it, the truth is rejected and false doctrine is defended with the sword." (164; I:214).

"This is my only joy and the desire of my heart, that I may extend the borders of the kingdom of God, make known the truth, reprove sin, teach righteousness, feed the hungry souls with the Word of the Lord, lead the stray sheep into the right path, and win many souls for the Lord through His Spirit, power and grace." (50; I:75).

"I labor with no other aim than that I may teach repentance to the ignorant, sinful world which neither knows nor possesses Christ and His Word, and may lead them to Christ and His doctrine, ordinances and example, that many might be saved. And it is obviously to be seen that many a sinner has amended his sinful, carnal life and accepted an upright, penitent, pious life in the fear of his God." (119; I:162).

"We seek from our whole heart nothing but that we may effect the salvation of all mankind, and this not only by giving

our possessions and labor, but also (understand it in an evangelical sense) our life and blood." (455; II:255).

"They [the true Christians] seek nothing on this earth but that they may teach the whole world righteousness, that many may be saved from eternal death through the grace, Spirit, power and word of the Lord, and be won for Christ, and that thus, by God's gracious help, the short time of our earthly life may be improved to the glory of God and the service of our neighbor and at last we may become heirs of eternal bliss." (328; II:111).

"In the second place, we seek and desire with yearning ardent hearts, yea at the cost of our life and blood, that the holy gospel of Jesus Christ and His apostles, which alone is the true doctrine and will remain until Jesus Christ will re-appear in the clouds, may be taught and preached throughout all the world, as the Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples in the last words which He addressed to them on earth, Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15." (444; II:243).

"Therefore I will not cease, all the days of my life, as far as God, the merciful Father, through His boundless kindness is giving me knowledge, spirit, grace and wisdom, to teach and admonish both verbally and by writing all who seek the truth, that they may awaken while it is yet time and seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near." (454; II:254).

"We say with David, 'I believed, therefore have I spoken; I was greatly afflicted' (Ps. 116:10). For since God, the merciful Father has granted us poor ones the gift of faith, has bestowed upon us the Spirit of His love from on high through His Son Jesus Christ, and has besprinkled our hearts with the heavenly dew of His love, ... has awakened us from the dead and brought us to life, has given us a new heart and mind, and nourished us with the bread of life and we thus through His grace found the pearl of great price, the precious treasure, and obtained the ever abiding peace, which we could not obtain through the deceiving doctrine and subtle sophistry and false comforts of the theologians, therefore we earnestly seek,

to the extent of our opportunity, to make known and proclaim to all mankind the grace of God which has appeared, and His great love toward us, that they may experience with us the same joy and renewing of spirit and know and taste with all saints how sweet and good and kind the Lord is to whom we have come.

"To this end we preach as much as opportunity and possibility affords, both in day time and by night, in houses and in fields, in forests and wildernesses, in this land and abroad, in prison and bonds, in water, fire and the scaffold, on the gallows, and upon the wheel, before lords and princes, orally and by writing at the risk of possessions and life, as we have done these many years without ceasing. We are not ashamed of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, for we are its living fruit and mightily realize its moving power in our hearts, as may be seen in many places by the patience and willing death of many of our faithful brethren and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

"How gladly would we snatch away all mankind from the jaws of hell, deliver them from the chains of their sins, and by the gracious help of God win them for Christ through the Gospel of peace; for this is the true nature of love which is of God." (233; II:10).

"Consider, we pray you, that we can not possibly seek carnal profit in this matter, neither gold, nor silver, nor honor, nor ease, nor long life on earth; for it must be apparent to you that for this cause all must be sacrificed. We are constrained to this solely by the love of God and by a sincere faith which diligently heeds all the words of Christ and consecrates itself to God in willing obedience, knowing to a certainty that if we do not yield to Him nor obey in what the mouth of the Lord has commanded, we can not receive nor inherit the heavenly blessing and divine promise" (401a; II:195a).

"If you are of an honest mind, consider well what is our endeavor and aim, and think not that we are so completely deprived of reason that we walk this narrow way because of contentiousness and partisanship. O how gladly should we spare

our weak bodies, our wives and small children, our possessions and lives, and live in peace and tranquility, if we were not constrained by the love of God and the salvation of your souls and our own." (286a; II:67a).

I doubt not that if those who now assiduously seek my life, could see my inmost heart, their hatred against me and my brethren would be changed into friendly love[1] to us." (444a; II:243a).

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[1] The Folio Edition of Menno Simons' works has *vreemdelijcke liefde*, but the original edition has (Cc6a) *vriendlicke* which is obviously the correct reading. On the other hand, instances could be given that typographical errors in original editions were corrected in the Folio Edition, e. g., the *Book on Baptism* of 1539 has (Ba) *goetwilligher sondaren* while the Folio Edition has correctly *moetwilligen*.

V

MENNO'S LABORS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Before the end of the year 1536 we find Menno in East Friesland, Germany. Peter Jans of Blanckenham, who was beheaded in June 1540 at Kampen,[1] testified that he was baptized by Menno Simons in 1536 at Oldersum in East Friesland. Presumably Menno returned soon to Groningen or West Friesland. On January 8, 1539, Tjard Reynders of Kimswerd in West Friesland was executed because he had received Menno Simons into his house and had himself been baptized.

"About the year 1539," writes Menno, "a very pious and God-fearing man named Tjard Reynders was apprehended in the place where I sojourned, for the reason that he had received me, a homeless man, out of compassion and love, into his house, although in secret. A short time after this he was, after a free confession of his faith, executed and broken on the wheel as a valiant soldier of Christ, according to the example of his Lord, although he had the testimony, even of his enemies, that he was an unblamable and pious man."[2]

Concerning Menno Simons' early labors in West Friesland we have an important testimony in a letter written in May 1541 by the imperial counsellors in that province to the regent

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[1] D. B., 1875, p. 65.

[2] 234. II:11. Compare *Van Braght*, p. 438. K. Vos (*Menno Simons*, p. 41) alleges that Tjard Reynders had, according to Jan van Batenburg's testimony at an earlier date "burned a women's cloister in West Friesland at the Woulden." Batenburg simply says, there was a report to that effect. It is clear from his confession that Batenburg was not convinced of the correctness of this evil report. Compare De Hullu. J., *Bescheiden betr. de Hervorming in Overijssel*, p. 247.

of the Netherlands, Mary, the former Queen of Hungary. This letter[3] which is preserved in the royal archives at Brussels and is here published for the first time in the English language, is as follows:

"Most serene, right honorable, most mighty Queen, most gracious Lady. We offer ourselves as humbly as we can for Your Majesty's service. Most gracious Lady, although the error of the cursed sect of the Anabaptists which in the last five or six years has very strongly prevailed in this land of Friesland, but now — the Lord be praised — through the publication of divers placards and through executions which have been carried into effect against transgressors of that sort, this sect would doubtless be and remain extirpated, were it not that a former priest Menne Symonsz who is one of the principal leaders of the aforesaid sect and about three or four years ago became fugitive, has roved about since that time once or twice a year in these parts and has misled many simple and innocent people. To seize and apprehend this man we have offered a large sum of money, but until now with no success. Therefore we have entertained the thought of offering and promising pardon and mercy to a few who have been misled [by the Anabaptists] and who desire grace [having recanted their faith] if they would bring about the imprisonment of the said Menno Symons. However we would not be so bold as to do this ourselves but desire first to advise Your Majesty of it, praying to be informed of Your Majesty's good pleasure and command which we, to the extent of our power, are willing and ready to carry out, as knows God Almighty. May He long spare Your Majesty in good health and happy reign. Written at Leeuwarden on the nineteenth day of May, 1541. Your Majesty's very humble and obedient servants, the counsellors ordained of the Imperial Majesty in Friesland."

The civil authorities of West Friesland believed, as is shown by this letter, that the church in those parts would have been extirpated, had it not been for the labors of Menno Simons. This document shows also that the Anabaptists were considered guilty of death, even if they recanted. The imperial counsellors in this letter asked the queen for permission to release a few apostate Anabaptists on the condition that they be-

[3] Printed in *D. B.*, 1864, p. 138 seq.

tray Menno Simons into the hands of the authorities. The reply of the queen bears the date of May 31, 1541. The queen had no objection to the plan of the counsellors provided that not over two of such who had been rebaptized should be given their liberty and this on the condition that "they were truly penitent and pledged themselves to report to the authorities all Anabaptists whom they might at any later time find in Friesland." Here as well as in certain German provinces all Anabaptists who fell into the hands of the authorities were as a rule executed, even if they denied their faith. As early as 1527 the Duke of Bavaria gave orders to burn those who refused to recant and behead those who recanted.

The plan of apprehending Menno Simons by employing traitors of that sort was not successful. The poor men who permitted the executioners to convert them to the national faith, professed that faith, as a rule, only as long as they found themselves in the clutches of the persecutors. Notwithstanding the extraordinary measures taken by the government to arrest Menno Simons, he continued his labors in West Friesland for some time. The "Criminal Sentence Book" of Leeuwarden, in a document dated Nov. 14, 1542, contains the confession of a brother named Sjouck Hayes, to the effect that Menno Simons in the same year had preached in a field not far from the city of Leeuwarden.[4]

Emperor Charles V published a severe edict against Menno Simons, on Dec. 7, 1542.[5] This important document which here follows shows vividly the untold difficulties and dangers under which Menno labored.

By the Emperor.

"To our worthy, beloved Mayors, Jurors, and Counsellors, etc., of our city of Leeuwarden, Greeting:—

"Whereas, it has come to our knowledge and we have fully

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[4] *D. B.*, 1906, p. 4.

[5] Reprinted *D. B.*, 1864, p. 144 seq., and Vos, *Menno Simons*, pp. 235-238.

ascertained that a [former] priest, Menno Symonss, formerly pastor at Witmarsum in our land of Friesland, being polluted with Anabaptism and other false teachings, had departed out of the said land, but we have now obtained trustworthy information that he has again secretly returned into our aforesaid land where he is now sojourning, endeavoring at night and other unseasonable times and in divers places to seduce by his false teachings and sermons the simple people, our subjects, and to lead them away from the faith and unity of the Holy Church; and that he also has undertaken to make a few books treating on his aforesaid erroneous teachings, and to circulate and scatter the same among our aforesaid subjects, which he has no right to do and we can not tolerate the same;

"Therefore, to take appropriate steps in this matter, we ordain and command herewith, that you everywhere in your jurisdiction, do publish, cry out and proclaim in the places where such matters are usually brought to the knowledge of the public, that every one in our aforesaid land, of whatever station he may be, should be on his guard, not to receive the same Minne Symonss into his house or on his property, or to give him shelter, or food, or drink, or to accord him any favor or help, or to speak or converse with him, in whatever manner or place it may be, or to accept or keep in possession any of the aforesaid books published by the same Minne, or any other books that he may publish at any future time — all on penalty of punishment on life and property, as heretics, as may be found due according to the law and our previous placards;

"And further that we have permitted and authorized every one of our subjects, whoever he may be, and permit and further authorize through this decree, that they may apprehend the same Minne wherever they may be able to find him, no place or jurisdiction excepted, and send him captive to our court in Friesland; for which they, in case they accomplish this, shall receive for a recompense, besides the expenses they may have incurred in this matter, the sum of one hundred golden Karolus gulden, which shall be paid them by our General Treasurer of Friesland without any hesitancy.

"To him who may undertake and accomplish this work, we decree and promise grace and pardon regarding that which he may have committed against us in the matter of Anabaptism or other heresy, or in lesser crimes, on condition, in case he was polluted by Anabaptism or other heresies, that he repent of the same and come again to the unity of the holy Church.

"In the same manner we most earnestly command, on pain

of the most grievous penalties, that ye do the utmost diligence to investigate and inquire concerning the said Minne among his followers and adherents who may be apprehended anywhere within your jurisdiction and, together with such information as ye may obtain, to send them as prisoners to our aforesaid court, that they may be dealt with according to their deserts.

"We hereby also give authority and special command to you and all our subjects, in whatever jurisdiction it may be found possible to apprehend him, to be guided by the instructions above given; we bid and command every person as regards the above said capture [of Menno] to put forth their united efforts and render all help and assistance that may be asked of them toward that end. In doing this they will incur our pleasure.

"Given in our city of Leeuwarden under our secret seal, published as a placard, on the seventh day of December of the year 1542.

"By the Emperor to his Majesty's Stadtholder, President and Counsellors in Friesland.

(Signed) Boeymer.

"Received on December thirteenth and published on the fourteenth day of the same month."

In the perusal of this important decree, it will be noticed that Menno Simons is not accused of crime except heresy, "Anabaptism." In the eyes of the Catholic Emperor this was the greatest of crimes. Grace and pardon is promised to Anabaptists who recant and come back into the national church and to those who are guilty "of lesser crimes," if they deliver up Menno Simons to the authorities. The expression, "lesser crimes," has reference to any crime in the catalogue, since "Anabaptism" was considered a greater "vice" than anything else. Hence Menno says correctly that the worst criminals were offered pardon if they would deliver him up to the magistrates.[6] The edict also shows that all those of like faith with Menno Simons were "sought unto death." And not only those who rendered him any service whatever or talked with him, but also those in whose possession any of his writings were

[6] 224. II:11. Compare *Van Braght,* pp. 438, 449. The expression "the crime of Anabaptism" occurs in various edicts.

found,[7] were threatened with the severest penalties "in life and property." That he preached at night, as said in the edict, Menno did not deny, but in his defence against Gellius Faber he points out that, notwithstanding the persecution, he preached more in day-time than at night.

There is unmistakable evidence of Menno Simons' labors in that period in West Friesland. Nevertheless, it is probable that in the first years after his ordination the principal field for his ministerial labors was the province of Groningen, including the city of the same name, located between West and East Friesland. In Groningen he baptized, in 1539, Quirinus Peters, who later went to Amsterdam, and, with five others, was burned at the stake, April 16, 1545.[8] Of those who were baptized by Menno in this province — their number was presumably large — this martyr is the only one whose name has come down to us.

In 1541 Menno Simons went to Amsterdam. Shortly before he left the eastern parts of the Netherlands, he wrote a tract, *A Loving Admonition* in which after many noteworthy exhortations he says:

"And above all pray for your poor and willing minister who is sought with great diligence to be delivered up to death, that God, the gracious Father, may strengthen him with His holy Spirit and save him from the hands of those who so unjustly seek his life, if it be His Fatherly will; and if it be not His will, that He may then grant him in all tribulation, torture, suffering, persecution and death such heart, mind, wisdom and strength," etc.[9]

From 1541 to 1543 Menno Simons stayed mostly in Amsterdam and North Holland. The names of two brethren are known whom he baptized at Amsterdam, namely the aged

[7] To have a book of Menno Simons was made a crime. This explains why in one of the earliest books of Menno, a copy of the *Foundation* of 1539 now in the Mennonite Library at Amsterdam, the name of the author is erased and "Dirk Jans" written in its place. It is not known who was the owner of this book.

[8] *Van Braght*, p. 457.

[9] 637; II:448.

Lukas Lamberts and the book-seller Jan Claeszoon (Claassen). Both suffered martyrdom on Jan. 19, 1544.[10] Claeszoon was a minister of the Gospel and made it his business to circulate Menno's writings. The meetings of the congregation in Amsterdam were held in his house. The martyr Claes Gerbrands who was burned at the stake at Wormer, Aug. 6, 1552,[11] testified that he heard Menno Simons preach in Amsterdam (probably previous to 1543).

In the period of Menno Simons' labors in the Netherlands he wrote a number of books. *The Foundation of the Christian Doctrine* is among them the most important. It was printed in 1539 or 1540, the title page bearing the first and the last page the second date. Only two copies of this edition are extant. This book was revised and partly rewritten by Menno Simons and published about 1554 under the title *A Foundation and Plain Instruction of the Saving Doctrine of Jesus Christ.* The revision has been often printed in Dutch, German and English, four German editions and one English having been published in Pennsylvania. The original edition of 1539 was reprinted unchanged in 1616. At least three copies of this reprint are in American libraries.[12]

In the preface Menno says that he has set forth the faith and principles of the brotherhood. "We ask the God-fearing governments and all men to read and consider the exposition of our faith, that they at last may know for what teachings we stand and why we daily suffer persecution, are banished, plundered, abused and killed as innocent sheep for the slaughter. — In all humility we desire most earnestly that ye may thoroughly investigate and learn the summary of our cause and doctrine. We pray you not to esteem us worse than thieves and murderers whose case ye diligently examine before ye execute or banish them. That for which we are made to suffer is not a small matter; it does not concern earthly possessions, not name or reputation, nothing merely temporal and earthly, but it con-

[10] D. B., 1864, p. 146; *Van Braght*, p. 451.

[11] *Van Braght*, p. 515.

[12] In the library of Hon. Samuel W. Pennypacker, Schwenksville, Pa., of Rochester Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y., and Union Theological Seminary, New York.

cerns God and His word, eternal life or eternal death. Therefore in considering these matters, do not look upon long usages and customs of the fathers, not upon the wise and learned of this world; the matter is deeply hidden from their eyes. — No one may discern it except he who desires to live according to the will of God (John 7:17). — Look, we pray you, only upon God's word and doctrines, upon the example and practice of the prophets, Christ and the apostles; let them be your rule of conduct and book of counsel in these matters and you shall forthwith begin to see whether we are without or within the truth."[13]

In the chapter "On True Penitence" Menno says:

"In short, this is the principal part of our doctrine, namely to 'abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul' (I Pet. 2:11), to 'crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts' (Gal. 5:24), to 'be not conformed to this world' (Rom. 12:2), to 'cast off the works of darkness' and 'put on the armour of light' (Rom. 13:12), to 'love not the world neither the things that are in the world' (I John 2:15), to 'put off the old man' and 'put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness' (Eph. 4:22-24), namely faith, love, hope, righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, readiness to bear the cross, generosity, mercy, chastity, sobriety, an earnest hatred and reproving of sin and a true favor and love to God and His blessed word."[14]

"O dear honorable lords" says Menno in the conclusion to this book, "grant to your humble servants that we may teach and live according to the will and according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as His holy, blessed word has taught and commanded us. — There is verily no other instruction to eternal life than God's word alone."[15]

Another important book of this period is *Christian Baptism*, 1539.[16] The book *Of the True Christian Faith and its Power* appeared probably in 1541. It was never reprinted in its original form but was revised and partly rewritten and published in 1556 with some changes in the title. The original

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[13] *Dat Fundament des Christelyken leers,* fol. A3a seq.

[14] The same, B4a.

[15] The same, S6a.

[16] Of the original print two copies are known (in the libraries of the university of Kiel and of Juniata College). A third copy which was used by Elder John Holdeman, Jasper, Mo., has not yet been found.

print was supposed to be lost, but a defective copy was found a few years ago at Kiel; only one complete copy is known and this is in America.[17] All later prints follow the revision of 1556 which differs largely from the first edition. The purpose of this book is, so Menno informs us in the preface, to point out that the body whom he represented were "not legalists and do not put undue emphasis on works, neither refuse to give that which is most important, its rightful place," as they were "slandered of all the world" and especially of "the learned."[18] The fact that the accusation of legalism against Menno and his friends has only recently been re-asserted[19] is evidence of the importance of this book. Extensive quotations on the point in question will be given elsewhere.

Menno Simons' most notable co-laborers in the earlier years of his ministry were Obbe and Dirk Philips. Obbe Philips' eventual withdrawal from the Brethren (probably in 1541) has already been mentioned. When he forsook the brotherhood, Menno Simons, it has been supposed, decided to become his successor as the leader of the Brethren and thus the further existence of the Brotherhood was assured.[20] While it can not for a moment be questioned that Menno Simons rendered the Brotherhood in the Netherlands and North Germany services whose importance can be scarcely overvalued, the assumption that without his labors the denomination would have perished has all probability against itself. Menno Simons was by no means the only leader of the Brethren in this trying

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[17] In the library of Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. It is bound together with two other original prints of Menno, namely the *Christian Baptism* and *The Reasons why Menno Simons Continues to Write*. An identical volume, containing these three books (one incomplete) is at Kiel. The two books here named were later reprinted in their original form.

[18] *Van dat rechte Christen Gheloove ende zijn cracht*, fol. B7b.

[19] E. g. by W. J. Kühler, Het *Socianisme in Nederland*, p. 43: Menno and his followers "found themselves altogether upon the standpoint of the law." (Compare also p. 44 of the same book).

[20] Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 35.

period. Dirk Philips, the noted co-laborer with both his brother Obbe and with Menno, was a man of strong convictions; as a positive character he was second to neither. Clearly Obbe Philips lost his former influence before he drew back and renounced the Brotherhood. This is evident from the noteworthy fact that the number of his followers was very small when he severed his connection with the Brethren. Menno Simons informs us in 1554 that not ten persons could be found who were of one mind with him.

VI

THE DIFFICULTIES UNDER WHICH MENNO SIMONS LABORED

His Own Testimony

"Yes, dear reader, the true Christian faith, as the Scripture requires, is so living, active and powerful with all those who through the grace of the Lord have rightly received it, that they, for the word and testimony of the Lord, do not hesitate to forsake father and mother, wife and children, money and possessions, to suffer all scorn and disgrace, hardships and dangers, and finally to have their poor weak bodies which are so fearful of suffering, burned at the stake, as may be frequently seen and observed in the instances of so very many people and faithful witnesses of Jesus, especially in these our Netherlands.

"Alas! how many did I formerly know, and know the greater part of them now, both men and women, servants and maids (would to God that they be increased, to His praise and to the salvation of all the world, to many hundred thousand) who from the inmost of their souls seek Christ and His word and lead a pious, unblamable life (yet ever in weakness) before God and all men; they are sincere and sound in doctrine, unblamable, I say, in their life, full of the fear and love of God, helpful to everyone, merciful, compassionate, humble, sober, chaste, not refractory or seditious, but quiet and peaceable, obedient to the government in all things that are not contrary to God; and yet, they have for a number of years seldom slept on their own beds and do not now. For they are hated of

the world in such a measure that they are persecuted without mercy, betrayed, apprehended, exiled and robbed of their property and life, like highway men, thieves and murderers. And this for no other reason than only that they out of true fear of God, do not dare to have a part in the abominable carnal life nor the cursed shameful idolatry of this blind world." (115b; I: 158).

"The said doctrine of the holy divine Word we have had in the German countries for many years, and have it daily more and more in such power and clearness that it is palpable and evident that it is the finger and the work of God. For the haughty become humble, the avaricious liberal, the drunkards sober, the unchaste pure, etc. For the word of God is accepted of them with such assurance that they do not hesitate to forsake father and mother, husband, wife and children, their possessions and life on account of it, and willingly suffer death. For many are burned at the stake, many drowned, many executed with the sword, many imprisoned, exiled and their property confiscated. Nevertheless all avails nothing with the obdurate persecutors. If it is only said, when a poor innocent one of the sheepfold of the Lord has been slaughtered, 'He is an Anabaptist,' it is believed sufficient. They do not inquire what proof and Scriptural grounds he had, of what nature his conduct and life was, whether he injured any one or not. Neither do they reflect or consider that it must be a special work and power .... to cause a man to suffer unspeakable infamy and shame, great persecution and misery and often death, as you may see.

"If a thief is led to the gallows, a murderer is broken upon the wheel, or another malefactor punished by an uncommonly painful manner of death, everyone inquires what he has done. The sentence is not pronounced as long as the judges do not fully understand the facts and know the truth concerning his evil deeds. But whenever an innocent contrite Christian whom the gracious Lord has rescued from the evil, wicked ways of sin and brought upon the way of peace, is accused by the

priests and preachers and brought before their court, they do not consider him worthy to really investigate what reasons and Scripture move him that he will no longer listen to the priests and preachers .... they do not desire to know why he has mended his life and received the baptism of Christ, or what may be his motive that he is willing to suffer and die for his faith. They only ask whether he is baptized. If the answer is in the affirmative the sentence is fixed and he must die." (108b; I: 149b)

"However lamentably we may here be persecuted, oppressed, smitten, robbed, burned at the stake, drowned in the water by the hellish Pharaoh and his cruel, unmerciful servants, yet soon shall come the day of our refreshing and all the tears shall be wiped from our eyes and we shall be arrayed in the white silken robes of righteousness, follow the Lamb, and with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sit down in the kingdom of God and possess the precious, pleasant land of eternal, imperishable joy. Praise God and lift up your heads, ye who suffer for Jesus' sake; the time is near when ye shall hear, 'Come ye blessed' and ye shall rejoice with Him for evermore." (87b; I: 122b)

"We poor, homeless people, deprived of all human assistance and consolation, who like innocent shepherdless sheep have become a prey to the roaring lions of the forest and the devouring beasts of the field, a spectacle and reproach to the whole world, who have to suffer daily the tyrannical sword of the lords and princes, hear and endure the inhuman revilings and abuses of the learned and the terrible lying and scoffing of the common people, we humbly beg and entreat the Imperial Majesty, kings, lords, princes, authorities, and officers, everyone in his calling, dignity and honor, all our beloved gracious rulers, we beg you through the deep and bloody wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you but once lay aside all displeasure and evil opinion concerning us, and with sincere pity take to heart the inhuman severe oppression, homelessness, need, cross, and martyrdom of your distressed and innocent servants. For the

great Lord before whom we stand, who is the searcher of all hearts and before whose eyes all things are open and revealed, knows that we seek nothing else upon this earth than that we with a good conscience may order our lives in accordance with His holy commandments, ordinances, word and will.

"We ask you to show somewhat of natural probity and human charity towards your subjects, and consider in your hearts that we homeless, forsaken people in our body are neither wood nor stone, but we are with you descended from one father, Adam, and born of one mother, Eve. — Examine, I say, our doctrine and teaching and you will, through God's grace find that they are the pure, unadulterated doctrines of Christ, the holy word, the word of eternal peace.

"O ye beloved sirs, put your sword into the sheath .... It is indeed a terrible abomination and a mad wickedness thus miserably to murder, destroy and kill those who with so zealous hearts fear the Lord and seek eternal life and who would injure no one in any way whatever. The death of His saints, says David, is precious in the sight of the Lord. It is Jesus of Nazareth whom you persecute, and not us (Acts 9:5). Therefore awake, forbear, fear God and God's word; for you and we shall all be called to appear before one Judge.

"We do not ask for favors as the evil-doers of this world do; for in this our doctrine, faith and practice we have not sinned, although we are called upon to suffer so much. But we resist only the doctrine, ordinances and life of Antichrist, and this with the word of the Lord, as contained in the Scriptures. We resist neither the emperor, nor king, nor any authority in the things to which they are called of God, but we are ready to all obedience, even to death, in all that is not against God and God's word, and we know without any doubt what the Scriptures enjoin upon us in regard to obedience to magistrates. But we ask for mercy sufficient that under your gracious protection we may in liberty of our conscience live, teach, labor, and serve the Lord." (10; I:22).

"We are poor pilgrims and strangers, miserable according to the flesh, who not on account of any crime but for the testi-

mony of Jesus and for conscience' sake must flee with our wives and children before the tyrannical, bloody sword, to save our lives, and thus in foreign countries, in anxiety and tribulation, hearing many scornful and abusive words, earn our bread." (510; II:315)

"Yea, it has come to this (may God make it better) that where four or five, ten or twenty, have met in the name of the Lord, to speak of the word of the Lord and to do His work, in whose midst Christ is, who fear God with all their heart and lead a pious, unblamable life before all the world, that if they are caught at a meeting or if accusation is brought against them, they must be delivered up to be burned at the stake, or drowned in the water. But those who meet in the name of Belial .... in public houses of ill fame, play-houses, fencing-schools and the accursed drunken taverns, who live in open disgrace and act wickedly against God's word, such live in all freedom and peace. —

"I do not esteem my life to be better than the beloved men of God did their lives. I can be deprived of nothing except this perishable mortal flesh which at some time must die and return to dust (even if I should live to the age of Methuselah). A hair shall not fall from my head without the will of my heavenly Father. If I lose my life for the sake of Christ and His testimony, and on account of my sincere love to my neighbor (in whose salvation I am interested) I know of a certainty that I shall save it to life eternal. Therefore I can not keep the truth to myself, but I must testify to it and set it forth without hypocrisy in the true fear of God, to my beloved lords." (53a; I:78b).

"We seek not your destruction, but your amendment; not your condemnation but your eternal salvation; we seek not your lives, but your spirit and soul; on account of which I have these seven years been made to suffer and do yet suffer great slander and scorn, anxiety, hardship, persecution and very great danger of imprisonment. — Up to this hour I could in all these countries round about (where, alas, they have for a long

time had vain boasting of the divine word, far more than fear of God) not obtain a little hut nor a cabin of clay or straw where my poor wife with our little children might safely sojourn for a half a year or a year. O cruel, unmerciful Christians!" (521; II:327b).

"We seek upon earth nothing but that we humbly and faithfully in our great weakness may obediently follow the express and clear word, Spirit, example, command, prohibition, usage and ordinance of the Lord according to which everything must be ordered in the kingdom and church of Christ, as is testified and shown on every hand by our tribulation, oppression, homelessness, anxiety, loss of property and life. Therefore it is before God and man un-Christian, nay manifestly tyrannical and unjust, to impose on us the penalty and punishment which was laid on the Circumcelliones, alone for the sake of baptism which we have so strongly defended with the word of God and the teaching and usage of the apostles against all human philosophy and inventions.

"In the first place we would therefore humbly beseech your Excellencies to consider for Christ's sake in pity and paternal solicitude how lamentably we, your suffering subjects, who however were created with you by one God, and purchased with the same treasure, and who will at last appear with you before the same Judge, are without cause belied, derided and slandered by the whole world and especially by the theologians, and how in some places they are without compassion and mercy put to death and left for the birds of the air to devour as the worst people upon the earth; how they, as our predecessor, Christ, are with the criminals put to the stake and to the wheel, in consequence of which some of us, with our wives and little children, have been robbed of our possessions, inheritance and property acquired by hard work, and must roam in foreign countries unclothed and destitute, and this for no other reason, the Lord knows, than that we do not approve of the inordinate life of this world and do not make common cause with the preachers who by their doctrine, sacraments and life contradict the word of the Lord; for no other reason than that we rightly

use the Lord's baptism and supper, shun according to the Scriptures all idolatry, self-righteousness, and abuses; and that we in our great weakness are minded to fear the Lord and follow righteousness.

"Inasmuch as it is found in fact and in truth that our faithful brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, the beloved companions in the tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:9), so sincerely fear and love the Lord, their God, that rather than knowingly and wilfully speak a false word [denying that they were baptized] or to act hypocritically contrary to God's word [keeping themselves against their convictions outwardly in the state church in order to shun persecution]; they would give their good name, reputation, as well as their money, goods, bodies, and everything of which human nature may be desirous, as a prey to the blood-thirsty; therefore we would leave it to the judgment of your Excellencies and Honors, whether they are such pernicious, evil people as, alas, they are called by many, and generally adjudged.

"They seek nothing on this earth but that they, as much as lieth in them, serve the whole world unto righteousness and that they through the grace, Spirit, power and word of the Lord may save many from eternal destruction and win them unto Christ; that they may thus, with the gracious help of God, improve the short time of their earthly existence in the service of their neighbor, to the praise of God in Christ Jesus, and be eternally saved. If this is to be called heresy and devilish deceit, as the preachers cry, then the Son of God, Christ Jesus together with all the prophets, apostles and high witnesses of God would clearly be heretics; and then all the Scriptures, which teach nothing but amendment of life and everywhere point us to Christ, must be nothing than seducement and deceit; this is incontrovertible. For they conform themselves in all that they do, as much as lieth in them, to the word, spirit, life, commands, prohibitions, ordinances and usages of the Lord, as their open actions indicate and testify before all the world.

"O beloved lords, we beseech you, not to despise our reasonable and Christian petition, but to consider it in love. — It

is to us no joking matter or quibble, but we mean from our whole heart what we say, as our sore persecutions indicate and testify." (327; II: 109)

Against the accusations, "that we are rebellious and would take cities and countries by force of arms, if we had the power," Menno says: "I, a poor, homeless man (dear reader, think not that I say this from motives of vain honor) have for about seventeen years in my weakness feared the Lord and served my neighbor in much misery, anxiety, tribulation and grief. I have without complaint born the reproach and cross of the Lord and I trust by His grace I will continue to bear it to the end, and to testify by tongue and writing, life and death with a good conscience to His holy, beloved word, will and ordinance, as much as is in me — and should I then yet at heart be a disturbing, rebellious, vengeful and bloody murderer? May the Most High save His poor servant from that!

"Again in Brabant, Flanders, Friesland and Gelders the God-fearing, pious people are daily innocently led to the slaughter and inhumanly martyrized with great, grievous tyranny. Their hearts are full of spirit and strength; their mouths flow as the rivulets; their fruits scent like the sacred spices; their doctrine is well founded and their life unblamable. Neither emperor or king, fire nor sword, life nor death may frighten them or separate them from the word of the Lord. (Marginal note: A true, consecrated Christian is an unconquerable knight; yea he is stronger than emperor or king). And should their hearts yet be entangled with bitterness, rebellion, vengeance, robbery, hatred and blood-shed? Then indeed there would be much vain suffering." (503; II: 307 seq.)

"No lie is so disgraceful and gross, that they dare not bring against those who fear God. — And these unchristian, terrible lies are not enough for the world, but they who know Christ and would willingly live after His word must endure harder things; they must bear severer persecution, as we witness with our own eyes. For how many pious children of God have they for the testimony of God and their conscience' sake within a few years deprived of their homes and posses-

sions, have confiscated their needed property, and committed it to the bottomless money chests of the Emperor; how many have they betrayed, driven out of cities and countries and put them to the stocks and torture, turning the poor orphans naked into the streets. Some they have hanged, some they have tortured with inhuman tyranny and afterwards choked them with cords on the stake. Some they roasted and burned alive. — Some they have killed with the sword and given them to the fowls of the air to devour. Some they have cast to the fishes; some had their houses destroyed; some have been cast into slimy bogs. Some had their feet cut off, one of whom I have seen and conversed with. Others wander about here and there, in want, homelessness and affliction in mountains and deserts, in holes and caves of the earth, as Paul says. They must flee with their wives and little children from one country to another, from one city to another. They are hated, abused, slandered and belied by all men. By the theologians and magistrates they are denounced. They are deprived of their food, are driven forth in the cold winter and pointed at with the finger of scorn; yea whoever can assist in the persecution of the poor oppressed Christians, thinks he has done God service, as Christ says, John 16:2." (147a; I:196a)

Under the marginal title "Judging the Christians' cause according to the flesh, it seems to be a great seduction," Menno says: "Again our persecutors advance an excuse, saying it is right that we should be persecuted, for we deplorably mislead many persons and bring them to destruction To this we reply: If this cause is considered and judged according to the flesh, it seems indeed that many men are miserably deceived by us. For all those who desire to follow obediently and sincerely our doctrine, life and confession, must be ready to forsake all that they have received of God; their good name, reputation, land, house, gold, silver, father, mother, sister, brother, man, wife, son, daughter, yea life itself. — Gallows, wheel, offensive pools, the stake and the sword, as also hunger, thirst, want, affliction, distress, anxiety, nakedness, sorrow, buffeting, bonds and imprisonment must be their portion and lot here upon earth. No

man may without the risk of his property and life befriend them or administer unto them. The father may not receive and assist his son, nor the son his father. In short, they are looked upon by the world as unworthy of heaven as well as of the earth. Moreover they shun all pomp and vanity, all intemperance in food and drink, and the carnal life in which the whole world delights. — Those who are taught of God, who have risen with Christ from the old life of sin to a new life, who have become partakers of the holy Ghost, who are spiritually minded, and consider and judge all things according to the Spirit, those do not consider it a deception and seduction, but love it above all gold and silver — nay above all that may be named under heaven." (146; I: 195 seq.)

"He who has purchased me with the blood of His love and has called me unworthily to His service, knows me and knows that I seek neither earthly possessions nor a life of ease, but only the praise of my Lord, my salvation and the salvation of many souls. For this I, my poor, feeble wife and little children have for nearly eighteen years endured extreme anxiety, oppression, affliction, homelessness and persecution and must at all times be in danger of life and great peril. Yea when the ministers of the national churches repose on easy beds and downy pillows, we generally have to hide in secluded corners. When they at weddings and baptismal dinners [held when the rite of baptism was observed] are unbecomingly entertained with pipe and tambour and lute, we must stand in apprehension, when the dogs bark, that the catch-polls are at hand.

"Whilst they are saluted as doctors, preachers and masters by everyone, we must hear that we are Anabaptists, hedge preachers, seducers and heretics and must be saluted in the devil's name. In short, whilst they are richly rewarded for their service with large incomes and easy times, our recompense and portion must be fire, the sword, and death.

"Behold my faithful reader, in such anxiety, poverty, oppression and danger of death have I, a homeless man, to this hour constantly performed the service of my Lord, and I hope through His grace to continue therein to His glory, as long as I

remain in this earthly tabernacle. What I and my faithful co-workers have sought or could have sought in these arduous and dangerous labors, is from the works and the fruits apparent to all the well-disposed.

"Beloved reader, observe well what I write. Gellius reproves us for preaching at night. It was in the year 1543, if my memory serves me right, that a decree was published throughout West Friesland, that criminals and manslayers were promised pardon, imperial grace, and freedom, and besides one hundred Carolus-Guilders, if they would betray me and deliver me into the hands of the executioners. [Here follows the account of the capture and martyrdom of Tjard Reynders; compare page 53].

"Also in 1546, at a place where they boasted of the Word [where the state church reformation had been accepted; obviously in one of the German provinces], a house of four rooms was confiscated, for the reason that the owner had rented them for a short time to my poor, sick wife and our children, although the neighbors had not known of it." (243; II: 11)

"In view of the fact that it is manifest how the whole world is so greatly embittered against us, (although undeservedly) that we may not be heard or seen, and many an innocent, God-fearing person who is not a teacher, is led as a sheep to the slaughter, and killed and murdered without mercy, by the sword, water, or fire, and we homeless teachers may not anywhere under the broad canopy of heaven obtain as much as a pig-sty (so to speak) to live in it in freedom, but that we through public mandates are already sentenced before we are apprehended, and already condemned before we had a hearing, a condition of things which, to the extent of our knowledge, has nowhere prevailed in the times of the apostles, therefore I pray all my readers for God's sake that they will in the fear of God thoughtfully consider what gross injustice Gellius and his followers have done us by the use of such wrong and bitter words. — We are also prepared at all times to render an account of our faith to any one and to defend the truth, whenever

it can be done in good Christian faith, without deceit and shedding of blood, as has been already said." (258; I:7 seq.; 260; II:35).

"The blood-thirsty murderous spirit urges some of the theologians and writers, who dare to boast of the crucified Christ and of His service, to write that the authorities should not only imprison those who are guilty according to the justice of the world, such as thieves, man-slayers, etc., and condemn them to death, but also the sincere, faithful children of God who seek Jesus Christ and His holy truth from all their heart and walk unblamably before the whole world. Those also are delivered up without mercy into the hands of the blood stained henchman, to be tortured, drowned, burned, or put to the sword, out of mere hated of the truth, because they shun their deceptive doctrine and false worship according to the word of the Lord. That I write the truth, of this are not only the Papist and Lutheran writers, but also the published writings of your most prominent leaders and brethren, namely John Calvin, Theodor Beza and John a'Lasco .... my witness before you and the whole world." (604a; II:408b).

The shedding of the innocent blood is due to the teaching and instigation of the theologians. In short, dear reader, if the merciful Lord had not, in His great love, tempered the hearts of some of the rulers and magistrates, but had let them proceed according to the instigations and blood-preaching of their theologians, no pious person would survive. But yet a few are found who, notwithstanding the words and writings of all theologians, tolerate the exiles and for a time show them mercy, for which we will forever give praise to God, the Most High, and also return our thanks in all love to such kind and discreet rulers." (323b; II:104b)

"Therefore, our beloved and gracious rulers according to the flesh, we pray you for God's sake to consider, if there is a desire for the right within you, in what great anxiety and suspense we poor people find ourselves. For if we are disloyal to Jesus Christ and His holy word, we must fear God's wrath, but if we stand loyally by His holy word, we fall prey to your

cruel sword. O beloved rulers and judges in the provinces, observe how from the beginning all the righteous, the prophets and Christ Jesus Himself with His holy apostles have been treated; and today you deal in the same manner with all who in purity of heart seek the truth and life eternal." (432b; II: 230).

"O Lord, methinks that I am assured that neither life nor death, neither angels nor principalities, nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth nor any other creature shall separate us from Thy love which is in Christ Jesus. Notwithstanding I know not myself; all my trust is in Thee. Though I have drunk a little of the cup of Thy suffering, yet I have not tasted it to the bottom. For when dungeon and bonds are suffered, when life and death, water, fire and sword are threatened, then will the gold be distinguished from the wood, the silver from straw, the pearls from stubble. Then do not forsake me, gracious Lord; for I know that trees of deepest root are torn up from the earth by the violence of the storm and the lofty, firm mountains are rent asunder by the force of the earthquake. Have not Job and Jeremiah, the true examples of endurance, stumbled in Thy way through weakness of the flesh? Therefore I pray Thee, blessed Lord, according to Thy faithfulness and grace, suffer me not to be tempted above that I am able to bear, lest my soul be made ashamed in eternity. I pray not for my flesh; I well know that it is subject to suffering and death. For this alone I pray, forsake me not in the time of trial but make a way of escape in my hour of temptation; deliver me of all my need, for I put my trust in Thee." (*Meditation to the Twenty-fifth Psalm*, 1539, fol. D1[1]).

"John saw the Babylonian woman 'drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.'" — Yea, my reader, this is the real work and way of Antichrist's church that she hates, persecutes and kills with the sword those whom she can not enchant with the golden cup of her abominations.

O Lord, O dear Lord, grant to Thy poor little flock that it

may not be entirely swallowed up by the wrathful dragon, but that we by Thy grace may through patience overcome through the sword of Thy mouth and may leave an ever abiding seed which shall keep Thy commandments, preserve Thy testimony and forever praise Thy great and glorious name. Amen, dear Lord, Amen." (300a; II:82b).

VII

MENNO'S FLIGHT TO GERMANY AND LABORS IN THE ELECTORATE OF COLOGNE

In the year 1543 Menno Simons left his fatherland — the Netherlands — to go to Northwest Germany. The empire of Germany was divided into many states, each of which had its own ruler whose relation to the emperor was somewhat similar to that of a governor of an American state to the President of the United States. Besides there were many "free cities" whose magistrates were not responsible to the princes of the territories in which these cities lay, but to the emperor direct. The reigning emperor, Charles V, was a strict Catholic and bent his energies toward the suppression of all other creeds, but in spite of all efforts some of the German rulers and free cities favored the Reformation movement and espoused the Lutheran or Zwinglian cause.

The emperor was the bitter foe of all Anabaptists. In 1529 the representatives of the German states, at Speier, passed a decree that Anabaptists should be put to death without a formal hearing or trial. But in consequence of the weakness of the federal government this decree was not carried out with equal severity in all the various states. While none of the princes or free cities would have dared to openly tolerate the Anabaptists, there was a marked difference in the way the Anabaptists were dealt with in the various states. In Germany there were districts in which the persecution was less severe than in the Netherlandish states. Menno informs us (243; II:11) that the imperial placard against him, in which a price was set on his head, was published throughout West Friesland,

but in other parts of the Netherlands also he was exposed to greater dangers than his brethren, since here his writings were principally read.

From 1543 to the end of his life Menno lived in Germany. East Friesland, the Electorate of Cologne, Holstein, etc., all in Northwest Germany, were principally his fields of labor.

It was probably about the beginning of winter, 1543, when Menno Simons with his family reached East Friesland. He had entered the state of matrimony in Groningen probably in 1539. His wife — her name was Gertrude — was of Witmarsum. Her sister Margaret was married to Reyn Edes, a colaborer with Menno, who also served the church in the capacity of an elder. One of the extant letters of Menno Simons, of which further mention will be made, is addressed to Margaret Edes.

In East Friesland the Roman Catholic faith was discredited but a new state church was not yet established. In this transitional period the Anabaptists for a short time enjoyed toleration. In the same year when Menno came to East Friesland the ruler of the province, Countess Anna, called the mild Zwinglian reformer John a'Lasco, a native of Poland, to the office of Superintendent of the proposed new state church. At Embden, the capital, a'Lasco encountered a number of Menno's brethren who referred him to Menno Simons. Consequently Menno was given an invitation by a'Lasco to come to the capital for an interview. With the consent of the ruler of the province and in the presence of a number of ministers and others a three days discussion between Menno Simons and a'Lasco was held in the chapel of the Franciscan cloister at Embden, in January 1544.

A small measure of publicity was apparently given these conferences, but it is evident from Menno's writings that he did not consider them public discussions.

He says in 1556: "Besides there are thousands, as I suppose, to whom it is well known through my printed writings ..... that many a time I have asked for a public discussion, even at the risk of being burned at the stake if I could not

maintain my faith and doctrine with the Scriptures; but such a discussion, alas, has never been granted me." (548; II:353). "For many years and with very much writing and petitioning I have many a time asked for a public discussion, but could not obtain it." (615; II:421). His *Grievous Supplication of the Poor, Despised Christians* and his *Short, Grievous Defence of the Despised Christians and Scattered Exiles* are urging requests for "a public discussion with our opponents and adversaries, in the presence of ten, twenty, or thirty pious, intelligent and reasonable men who love and fear the Lord and who can judge between good and evil, or a private discussion if it be not permissible in public; and their untruths and accusations should not be believed until teacher is confronted with teacher and the accuser with the accused, with equal rights and liberty, as the Word of God, Christian love and natural honesty may require and imply" (495; II:298a). At the conclusion of the first tract he says: "Therefore we poor and afflicted Christians humbly pray you, our most respected rulers, for the third time ..... that you may bring us and the preachers [of the state church] together, that our defence may be rightly heard and the truth presented with the word of the Lord, that the innocent may no longer be condemned to death against God's word" (330; II:112).

The subjects discussed between Menno Simons and John a'Lasco were: the incarnation of Christ, baptism, original sin, sanctification and the calling of the ministers. On the questions of original sin and sanctification the two parties found themselves of one mind;[1] on baptism, the Incarnation, and the manner of choosing ministers no agreement was reached. After the close of the discussions the preachers permitted Menno, as he himself testifies, to depart in peace, desiring however that he should send them a written statement of his faith which they might present to the civil authorities to give them information concerning the principles held by Menno and his friends.

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[1] That an agreement of the two men on original sin was impossible (Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 73) and that Menno was unorthodox on this doctrine is an untenable insinuation. Menno taught that all men inherit a sinful nature from Adam. Christ, the second Adam, has atoned for the guilt of original sin; hence all infants are saved and no man will be condemned for the sin of Adam.

In consequence Menno Simons wrote his *Brief and Clear Confession and Scriptural Instruction*[2] on the incarnation of Christ and the calling of the ministers. The book was later printed, but without Menno's knowledge, as he stated in his debate with Martin Micron. From this book it appears that Menno entertained hopes that a'Lasco would recognize his teachings as orthodox. From the fact that a'Lasco addressed the enthusiast David Joris: "To our most beloved brother David Joris, minister of the divine word," we may conclude that he approached Menno in a similar manner.

John a'Lasco published a Latin reply to the said book of Menno Simons. The latter's answer is his *Clear, Incontrovertible Confession and Demonstration,* of 1554. In this book Menno complains that false accusations were preferred against him by a'Lasco and others and he was misrepresented in such a way "that those who hear and read it, shut their noses and mouths at our approach" (353; II:141). Later he was made to realize that a'Lasco approved of the bitter persecution of the Brethren. "Your principal teachers and leaders," he writes to Martin Micron, "as e.g. John a'Lasco, Calvinus, and Theodor Beza, whom you recognize as your most worthy and beloved brethren, are men of blood. This is clear from the testimony of their own writings, as well as from the fact that Servetus was burned at Geneva and George of Parris was burned with four others [in 1551, under the reign of Edward VI] in England" (615; II:421). It is interesting to notice that Martin Luther also refers to the Catholic persecutors as "men of blood."[3]

In the preface to his first book to John a'Lasco Menno expresses the hope that this statement of his faith (to be presented within three months) was not asked of him from evil motives. However, without doubt, a'Lasco advised the govern-

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[2] The original edition of this book is lost. A copy of one of the earliest editions now known is in the library of Crozer Theological Seminary.

[3] Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther,* vol. 2, p. 229.

ment to which Menno's confession was delivered against tolerating the heads of the dissenters. A'Lasco was a representative of state-churchism. Menno was banished within a few months.

Menno Simons fled from East Friesland to the province known as the Electorate of Cologne. "I know," writes a'Lasco on July 26, 1544, to his friend Hardenberg, "that Menno just now is sojourning mostly in the bishopric of Cologne and seduces many in those parts." In this province Menno found a great field of labor. The ruler and archbishop, Elector Herman von Wied, "of praiseworthy memory," as Menno speaks of him (235; II: 14), realized the need of a reformation of the church. He decided upon the renunciation of Romish popery, but was slow to organize a new church. Meanwhile there were tolerated not only Lutherans and Zwinglians in the electorate, but even Anabaptists were nearly exempt from persecution. Menno lived in this province in comparative freedom about two years. Traces of his labors in this period are found in the confessions of martyrs. Metken Vrancken, a martyr, said in her examination by the inquisitors that Menno Simons was at Fischerswert in 1545 and she with others was taught by him.[4] Teunis van Hastenrath who was burned at the stake on July 30, 1551, in Linnich[5] stated that "Menno Simons was at Fischerswert five years ago" and he had read his books.[6] The martyr Lyske Snyer had heard Menno preach in a meadow near Illekhoven, about 1545, where Menno lodged in the house of Lemke, a deacon. Jater Raymakers who was burned at the stake in Arnhelm, August 9, 1550, had a book of Menno. Jan Neulen confessed in 1550 that Menno Simons, five or six years ago preached at Fischerswert in a field. He had not heard the sermon, but in the morning early Menno with two men came into his house and asked him to take him in a boat down the

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[4] D. B., 1864, p. 151.

[5] *Van Braght*, p. 477. Teunis van Hastenrath's predecessor in the ministry of this flock was Reinken Rademacher whose martyrdom is mentioned by *Van Braght*, p. 478.

[6] *D. B.*, 1909, p. 125.

Meuse river to Roermond. This he did and received his hire.[7] His house was confiscated by the authorities for the reason that Menno Simons had entered it without his protest.

Menno writes of his experiences at the time of his sojourn in the electorate of Cologne:

"In the days of the bishop Hermann, Elector of Cologne, of praiseworthy memory, I have asked of the theologians of Bonn upon their own suggestion that an open discussion be held before twenty or thirty witnesses or before a public meeting under safe conduct, but my desire was not granted, for they were advised by John a'Lasco and A. H. [A. Hardenberg] to refuse a discussion advancing three insinuations against me. They accused me of opinions which I have never entertained, much less expressed or advised, and which I shall not here mention. Concerning this I have the testimony of a minister named Henricus in his own hand writing.

"Also the preachers of Wesel in the land of Cleve have told our friends they would obtain a safe conduct for me and have a discussion with me. But when in writing I declared myself willing for a discussion, I received an answer that the executioner should have a discussion with me, and other tyrannical expressions" (235a; II:12a; compare 515b; II:321a).

The mild reign of Elector Herman of Cologne came to a sudden end in 1546 when in the Smalcaldian war the Emperor utterly defeated the Lutheran princes. The elector was deposed and Romanism restored throughout the province. Menno again saw himself compelled to flee. With his sick wife and small children he went, under great dangers, northward. Toward the end of the year we find him in the city of Lübeck.

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[7] Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 86.

VIII

FROM THE FLIGHT FROM COLOGNE TO THE DISCUSSIONS AT WISMAR

From the Electorate of Cologne Menno went in 1546 to Holstein in Northwest Germany. In this province his family seems to have lived until the end of his life. The place of their sojourn in the first years after their flight from Cologne is not known; later the family moved to Wüstenfelde near Oldesloe.

The most active co-laborers with Menno were, besides Dirk Philips, the elders Gillis of Aachen and Leonard Bouwens. Gillis had been a priest in the vicinity of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). The exact time of his renunciation of Romanism is not known. Probably in 1542 he was ordained an elder. He was a zealous worker. More than twenty martyrs whose confessions are extant admitted that they were baptized by Gillis of Aachen.

Leonard Bouwens of Sommelsdyk was ordained an elder in 1551. Of his previous life nothing is known, except that before his conversion he was a "Rederijker," a member of a society which flourished in the principal cities of the Netherlands. Their aims were of a literary and general educational nature. When the Reformation movement reached the Netherlands, many of the Rederijkers gave it a friendly reception.

The churches whom Leonard Bouwens served in the capacity of an elder were for the most part located in the provinces of the Netherlands where the persecution was most severe. Bouwens declared his willingness to comply with the desires of

the church in those parts and accept the office of an elder; his wife, however, was not entirely resigned to have her husband expose himself to so great dangers. She sent word to Menno Simons asking him to bring his influence to bear upon the church, that this should not be asked of her husband. Presumably the ordination had not yet taken place, and was to be performed by Menno Simons. Menno replied in a letter in which he enlarges on the subject of consecration. The letter follows.

"Most beloved in Christ Jesus. Grace and peace be to you. Dear, faithful sister in the Lord. My inmost soul is grieved in your behalf, more so than I can write. For I understand from our beloved brethren that it is so very difficult for you to acquiesce to the desire and petition of the afflicted and shepherdless congregations in regard to your beloved husband. I cannot severely reprove you for your attitude if I look upon the flesh and not upon the spirit and love. I also understand from the words of Leonard and Helmicht that you entertained the hope that Leonard should be released from the office by me. Most beloved sister in Christ Jesus, I trust that by the grace of God I sincerely love you with a godly love and am willing to serve you and all the pious with my blood whenever necessity requires it. Then, beloved sister, who am I that I should resist the Holy Spirit? And it is well known to you that the Church, without my knowledge, has asked that he should be ordained and has called him to this office. As the Church so earnestly desires of him to serve in this capacity, and his conscience, doubtless, constrains him to comply, how could I then oppose it, especially since I find nothing in Leonard to give any Scriptural ground for advising against his ordination?

"Dear sister, I am very sorry that I cannot comply with your desire in this matter, for your sorrow and grief pierces my heart, as often as I think of it. But the love of God and of our destitute brethren must ever be considered first. Yea, being called of the Lord and through the operating power of your God you have of your own free will consecrated yourself to serve not yourself, not your own flesh, but Christ Jesus and the brethren all the days of your life. I hope that you have made this vow from your heart, even if it cost your possessions and life. And you see now before your eyes how highly the existing need requires that which is asked of you. Therefore think of the days of your enlightenment and fulfil humbly and

obediently what, not of constraint but willingly, you have vowed and promised unto the Most High.

"O, beloved sister, look at the sad abandonment and need of your beloved brethren. — Our inmost souls must be moved at their great need when we take to heart the great hungering and thirsting of many pious hearts and the regrettable seducing and deceiving of false teachers, the discord engendering sects and other like evils. Inasmuch as the merciful Lord has granted to our beloved brother His divine knowledge, has enlightened him with His Holy Spirit and gifted him with speech and wisdom, so that the brethren are pleased with him, sincerely love him and desire that he should make use of his talent, and if you out of regard to flesh and blood should oppose this and not acquiesce therein, this would seem to me to be nothing else but when you see your brethren in imminent danger of death, in peril of fire or water or suffering great pain and misery, you would for self-seeking ends not rescue them or endeavor to help them.

"Dear sister, love your brethren as Jesus Christ has loved us. If you should for the sake of your brethren lose what you possess, remember that Christ for our sakes, for a time, left the glory of His Father and the company of angels, that we might obtain an inheritance in heaven which shall abide forever. So long as we live we shall have sufficient of the necessaries of life, if we fear God, depart from evil and do well unto others. Yea, sister, be comforted and of good cheer. The eternal Truth has promised us eternal bliss. If we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, the necessaries of life shall be added unto us. But if you are anxious concerning your husband's life, remember and believe that our life is measured by spans, that life and death are in the hands of the Lord, that not a hair falls from our heads without the will of our Father; He protects us as the apple of His eye.

"Elijah, David, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego, Peter, Paul, all escaped the hands of the tyrants and no man could injure them in the least so long as the appointed day and hour had not yet come. For as long as the merciful Lord has more pleasure in our life than in our death, they shall not succeed in taking our life; but whenever our death is more pleasing to the Lord than our life, we shall not escape their hands.

"O beloved sister, if even our dear brother should not serve his brethren in this capacity, he has nevertheless for a number of years already committed himself to the imminent danger of death, oppression, homelessness, reproach, persecu-

tion, anxiety, spoiling of his goods, water, fire, and the sword. And even if he had not subjected himself to the cross by baptism but could sojourn in or pass through any country in all liberty, you nevertheless would not know at what moment he would have to put off this tabernacle of clay and appear before his God.

"Therefore, beloved, faithful sister, be strong in the Lord, take good courage, commend yourself to the most high God who holds heaven and earth in His hand, who has given you and your husband body and soul, has called you through the Word of His grace, purchased and redeemed you with the blood of His blessed Son, who has washed, sanctified, cleansed and quickened you through His Holy Spirit; His mercy is over all His works; He knows your going out and your coming in. Dear sister, strengthen your beloved husband and do not weaken him, for it is required of us, as we love God so also to love our dear brethren.

"In short, take toward your neighbor the same attitude that Christ is taking toward you; for by this only sure and immutable rule must all Christian matters be measured and judged. Lo, beloved, faithful sister, as the Church calls our beloved brother to this office and service, I can indeed not with a good conscience oppose or else I would love flesh more than Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, and my sincerely beloved brethren.

"May the almighty, merciful Lord do in this matter according to His divine pleasure and guide the heart of my beloved sister, so as to be resigned to His holy blessed will. I sincerely thank you, dear sister, for the gift of your love you have sent me. My wife greets you lovingly with the peace of the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ be forever with you, most beloved friend and sister. Amen.

"Menno Simons, Your brother in the Lord."

Presumably Menno Simons' purpose in writing this letter was accomplished. Leonard Bouwens became one of the most active elders. He kept a list of baptisms administered by him, which shows that from 1551 to 1568 he baptized 10,251 persons.

To all appearance the territory of the Netherlands and North Germany was divided into districts, one of which was assigned to each of the elders. Dirk Philips lived in Schottland, a suberb of Danzig on the Baltic, and labored principally in

Northeast Germany.[1] The cities and provinces due east of the Netherlands constituted Menno Simons' district; he alone administered baptism in this territory. Nevertheless he traveled extensively in other parts. Traces of his labors are noticeable in modern Russia (Livonia) and as far north as the Swedish island of Gothland.

In 1546 the elders held a discussion with a representative of the Davidians at Lübeck and in the succeeding year a conference was held at Embden. Toward the close of the same year the elders met at Goch.

From 1552 to 1554 Menno published a number of books, among them his comprehensive reply to Jelle Smit, called Gellius Faber, Reformed minister in Embden, who had written a book warning the authorities of Menno and his friends and decrying their doctrine as unscriptural and injurious to the welfare of both church and state.[2] Menno's reply to Faber is the largest of his books. The account of his conversion and call to the ministry which has often been printed under the title *Menno Simons' Renunciation of the Church of Rome* was originally a part of this book.[3]

In 1553 we find Menno Simons at Wismar in Mecklenburg, one of the cities of the Hanseatic League. In this city the

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[1] It is not known when Dirk Philips began his labors at Danzig. About the time of Menno's death there was here a center of church endeavors.

[2] Faber speaks of "the sign Thau" which, he says, the Anabaptists supposed they had received. The word *Thau* occurs in the Vulgate version of the Bible in Ezech. 9:6. The early Zurich or Froschower version renders the passage similarly as the Vulgate: "Alle die aber, so das zeichen *Thau* an jnen habend, sollend jr nit anrüren." Menno obviously held the sign *Thau* to be symbolic of a holy life. (Folio edition, pp. 183[a]; 636[a]).

[3] This booklet has been repeatedly printed in Dutch, German and English. The first English translation is probably that of Ira Chase which was published in 1825 by the "Baptist General Tract Society" under the title, *Menno's Departure from Popery*.

Lutheran reformation was partly introduced in 1542 but, similar as in other provinces where the new state church was not yet fully established, the government showed itself lenient toward the Mennonites, although they were by no means openly tolerated. They had a congregation in this city. Menno writes of his experience in this place in a way which throws interesting light on the attitude of the authorities of Wismar toward the dissenters.

Menno had in Wismar a few discussions with Hermes Backereel and Martin de Cleyne, called Micron. The former came to Wismar from London. After the Smalcaldian war, when Menno saw himself compelled to leave Cologne, the Zwinglians also were oppressed in certain states. Many went to England, among them John a'Lasco and Hermes Backereel. They organized churches in London during the reign of Edward VI, and prospered for a time. The sudden death of this ruler, who was succeeded by his sister Mary, "the bloody," compelled all Protestants to leave England. On September 15, 1553, one hundred seventy-five persons embarked in two Danish ships at London for the continent of Europe. But whither could they go? The countries that could be reached by way of the sea were nearly all of the Catholic religion. They decided to go to Lutheran Denmark. King Christian of Denmark received them friendly, but when he learned that they were Zwinglians, he ordered them to leave his country. In the cold season of the year they saw themselves again compelled to take to sea.

One of the ships carrying the fugitives arrived at Wismar on December 21. The ship froze fast in the ice some distance from the shore and the exiles found themselves unable to land without assistance. The citizens and authorities of Wismar were obviously inclined to take the same attitude toward them, as the King of Denmark. Martin Luther had repeatedly given advice that Zwinglians should not be tolerated under Lutheran government; but here were people in danger of life and in sore need of help.

Menno Simons, in his defense against Martin Micron, describes the event of their coming to Wismar as follows:

"In the year 1553, a little before midwinter, it came to pass that word came to the brethren [at Wismar] to the effect that a ship load of people had arrived from Denmark, who for the sake of their faith were driven from England, and that they lay a short distance from the shore frozen up in the ice.

"When the brethren heard this, they were moved with Christian mercy toward them, as was proper and reasonable. They counseled together and did what was in their power to help them out of the ice and to make an acceptable way for them to get into the city without any commotion; as they also did, although they knew that to do so might bring to them trouble with the government.

[Marginal note:] "The brethren did not for fear of the cross, omit their service for them.

"They met them with wheat bread and wine, so, if there should be any sick or of delicate health among them, that they might refresh and strengthen them therewith. And after they had escorted them into the city, they brought together twenty-four Thalers out of their poverty and presented them to the leading men among them, that the needy, if there were any such among them, might be served and helped. The money they refused and said, 'We need no money and ask only that work may be secured for some of us.' In this our brethren assisted them as much as they could.

"In like manner one of our number, to be of service to them, offered to take the children of John a'Lasco into his house and to do the best he could for them. To this suggestion Hermes Backereel answered, 'No, this would not be proper; for John a'Lasco is a man who often has dealings with lords, princes and other high personages; it might (Oh, reader observe) injure his reputation if his children should sojourn with such people. Hearing this I observed that we had not met with the plain, true, humble pilgrims of Christ" (551; II:355).

On December 26, 1553 Menno had a discussion with Hermes Backereel on various points of doctrine. Thereupon the Zwinglian party sent one, named Bartholomew Huysman, to Martin Micron, a minister of their persuasion at Norden in East Friesland, to request him to come to their assistance in the debate with Menno.

Micron came to Wismar on January 25, 1554, and had two conferences with Menno. On February 6 the questions of baptism, the incarnation of Christ, the oath, divorce, the calling of the ministers and the civil authorities were discussed. The meeting lasted without interception for eleven hours and ended with a common meal. On February 15 the two men met again and discussed not without bitterness on both sides, on the incarnation of Christ.

The discussions between Menno Simons and the Zwinglian leaders at Wismar must not be thought of as public affairs. Public debates between Zwinglians and Anabaptists were entirely out of the question within Lutheran territory. Menno writes: "The discussion was granted Hermes and his friends on the condition that they should tell no man (since I was a poor, delicate man and hated of all the world) where the meeting took place. Upon this they, on their part, gave our brethren their hand, promising that they would never betray it. But how they have kept their word, their deeds have shown." It is clear from Menno's statements that the magistrates of the city in general entertained not unfavorable opinions of the Brethren; they did not molest them as long as they kept themselves in quietness and did not attract public attention. But public meetings of the Brethren were entirely out of the question; the authorities would have exposed themselves to grave dangers, had they granted them such liberties. The local authorities would not have admitted, if called to account, that they were aware of the presence of Anabaptists in the city.

On the question of the attitude of the Wismar authorities toward the Brethren, Menno's writings contain some interesting data. He says: "In similar manner they [the Zwinglian exiles] have failed to return gratitude to the city which showed them more kindness than all the eastern lands and Denmark, when in midwinter they knew not where to find shelter [and were permitted to remain in the city for some time]. By their unsalted, partial writings they have caused the city to be suspected by lords and princes and by other cities, that the authorities tolerated and favored us, although they knew no more of my place

of abode than of the hour of their own death" (552; II:356). Apparently the magistrates knew not Menno's dwelling place, and did not desire to know it. In his *Epistle to Martin Micron* Menno writes: "Besides you have given information concerning the place where I dwelled until that time, which Hermes had upon his inquiry learned from a little child, although it was well known to you that everywhere my life is undeservedly sought, out of mere hatred of the truth" (603; II:407).

Again Menno writes: "Not long after the first discussion at Wismar it was known in the streets of Embden where Menno lived and that Micron and his friends had a discussion with him." (551; II:365). "When I had thus answered his [Micron's] last question, they left me and went to the front part of the house. — I was told by the brethren that he was still arguing there .... also some of his companions, standing about the door near the street, became too loud in their talk. Then they were told by some of the brethren, it were well if they would go, since [in consequence of attracting public notice] we would all be in danger of being driven from the city." (564; II:370).

Martin Micron published under the title *A True Account*, in 1556, a part of the proceedings of his discussions with Menno. In this book he advanced charges of a personal nature against his opponent. Menno in turn wrote *A Very Plain and Pointed Reply to the Antichristian Doctrine and false Account by Micron Concerning the Discussion between Him and Myself, Held in* 1553.[4] This is one of Menno Simons' largest books and contains material which is of considerable historical interest. On April 12, 1556, Micron wrote to Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich informing him that about two weeks ago Menno's *Reply* was published and unless a strong answer was made "there is danger that many unlearned persons will be led astray by

[4] Copies of one of the earliest if not the original edition of this book are in the library of Crozer Theological Seminary and the Samuel Colgate Baptist Collection.

[5] Ottius, *Annales*, p. 125. — The book *Micronius, zijn leven, zijn geschriften, zijn geestesrichting*," by J. H. Gerretsen, gives a one-sided account of the discussions at Wismar. Compare *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, Leyden, 1896, pp. 309-312.

Menno's book,"[5] an evidence that his opponents recognized the great influence of his writings.

A few weeks after the discussion at Wismar, namely on February 23, when the arrival of the exiles from England had become known in other parts, they were banished from the city. They went to Lübeck. The Mennonites had not attracted public attention to the same extent. While the Zwinglians had not been in danger of their lives at Wismar (apparently they did not expect that they would be permitted to stay) the laws demanded the severest measures against the Anabaptists. An edict was published on August 1, 1555 by six cities of the Hanseatic League, namely Lübeck, Hamburg, Rostock, Stralsund, Wismar and Lüneburg against the Anabaptists as well as against the "Sacramentarians" (those who denied the real bodily presence of the Lord in the supper, i e. the Zwinglians). In all probability Menno Simons had previously returned to Holstein.

In Wismar seven elders and ministers held a conference in 1554 and adopted a number of rules and resolutions having reference to Christian practice and church discipline. These *Wismar Decisions* have been preserved, but evidently not in their original form. The articles, in the form in which they have been handed down to us, are of doubtful authority; the text is in part clearly corrupt and unreliable.

IX

MENNO SIMONS' RELATION TO THE STATE-CHURCH REFORMATION

Menno Simons believed the Reformation in so far as it was identified with the state-churchism to be superficial and inadequate and its principles partly unscriptural.

Both Luther (in Germany) and Zwingli (in Switzerland), the leading reformers, in the first period of their reformatory endeavors advocated the voluntary principle and liberty of conscience. Obviously they entertained in that period the optimistic hope that the Roman Church as a whole would consent to a reformation at least in those parts of the land to which the influence of the reformers principally extended. But in the course of a few years this hope proved groundless. And it became apparent that neither Luther's fellow-citizens in Saxony, nor Zwingli's countrymen in Zurich would as a whole accept the opinions of these reformers, if they were permitted to choose for themselves. Some would prefer to keep the Roman Catholic faith, and others were inclined to follow other reformers who on important questions were at variance with Luther and Zwingli, such as Carlstadt and Grebel.

The leading reformers preached the new doctrines a number of years before any changes in worship and practice were attempted. The governments protected them in the teaching of new doctrine, but were not yet ready to consent to changes in practice. Until the year 1525 the church of Saxony and Zurich did not formally throw off the papal yoke; the Roman Church was until then the state church, notwithstanding the anti-Romish

doctrines which were advanced by the reformers and their friends. For many centuries the church in these lands had been nominally a unit; the Roman Church was the state church, and the state did not permit deviations from the Roman Catholic practice. It was finally realized that only if the state was permitted to fight the battles of the church, as had been the case heretofore, could the (nominal) unity of the church be maintained.

Both Luther and Zwingli in teaching and preaching the new doctrines were protected by the state to the full extent of its power, but this protection was subject to the condition that the reformers, in the work which they had undertaken, would go hand in hand with the state. This was deemed necessary by the reformers for the success of the Reformation. As a human undertaking it was difficult to conceive that the attempted reformation of the church could be successful to any marked degree without the aid of the state but, on the other hand, if the new creed was introduced by the state and was made obligatory for the population as a whole, the great task of the reformers was immeasurably reduced; it would consist largely in persuading the princes to accept the new doctrines. Even if the state merely tolerated the reformers without lending them its strong arm to establish a new church, Luther could hope to win a large following. But what was the outlook for the church if the state took an inimical attitude, making the preaching and acceptance of the new doctrine unlawful? It is certain that Luther's sovereign, the Duke and Elector John of Saxony, would have refused to protect or tolerate him, had he insisted on a separation of church and state and liberty of conscience. Luther, in short, came to the conclusion that "there is no way out, except through the arm of the government." He consented to an amalgamation of church and state, a departure that was fraught with the most demoralizing consequences for the cause of the church reformation.

That Luther and Zwingli decided upon the continuation of the union of church and state, became evident before any changes from Roman Catholic worship and practice were intro-

duced. Luther entertained the hope that the church would be granted some measure of self-government by the state; he consecrated one of his friends (Amsdorf) bishop for the diocese of Naumburg, but the state refused to make a proper distinction between the new bishop and other ministers. Against his own inclination Luther finally gave his consent that the ruling princes should accept the office of *summi episcopi* or supreme bishop of the church in their respective countries. But these princes were as a rule pre-eminently statesmen and politicians. Some of them were guilty of grave offences in life and conduct. Some of the princes who through the woeful amalgamation of church and state became the heads of the church led lives that were hardly surpassed in profligacy by the worst characters which ever occupied the so-called chair of St. Peter. Some of these princes would not have accepted the new creed, had not the new order of things greatly enhanced their power, giving them the right to rule the church and the opportunity to confiscate the wealth of the cloisters. While formerly the church had been the mistress of the state, now in consequence of making the ruling princes the heads of the church, she was compelled to take the position of the state's humble handmaiden. The ministers became, virtually, officers of the state, and were designated as such by the decrees of certain princes.

In the provinces whose rulers accepted the new creed the priests were given orders to cease saying Mass and discard certain other Roman Catholic ceremonies and usages; they should preach the Gospel of justification by faith and all the doctrines of the Lutheran creed — all on pain of dismissal from their office. The priests were as a rule willing to accept the new order of things. A new organization was not undertaken. The people were never asked to unite with a new church. The Lutheran state church was identical with the former Roman Catholic state church as concerned the membership. The changes were introduced in the church, not by the people or by the priests, but by the heads of the state. The people had no choice in the matter. The infamous principle *Cujus regio ejus religio* (i. e. whose is the region his is the religion) ruled su-

preme; this principle was somewhat later formally accepted by the Estates of the empire. In consequence the population of a given state was compelled to accept the faith of its ruler and to change their creed if the ruler accepted a new faith. The people of the Upper Palatinate saw themselves obliged to accept not less than four changes of this sort.[1] "Everyone" says S. Franck, "fashions his faith to please the authorities; no one will suffer persecution for the faith's sake." The qualities which make for martyrdom were crushed by the existing relation between church and state. To turn the cause of the church and of the Reformation over to the state was to destroy the true religious spirit where it existed. Surprisingly small is the number of those who died as martyrs for the Lutheran cause after the establishment of the Lutheran state churches; the few instances of martyrdom occurred in the earlier years of Luther's reformatory labors.

The failure of the state church Reformation to bring about a real reformation of the church, was fully made clear in the great crisis which resulted from the utter defeat of the Lutheran princes by the Catholic Emperor in the Smalcaldian war, not long after Luther's death. The treason of the Lutheran Duke Maurice of Saxony and other Protestant princes made possible this victory of the Catholic party. The Emperor now demanded that the Lutherans accept the socalled Interim or "go-between-religion;" they should again embrace Roman Catholicism but were permitted to give the cup to the laity and retain their married ministers until a General Council of the Roman Catholic Church to which their delegates were to be admitted, should decide whether they could further enjoy these concessions. What the final decision of the proposed General Council would be it was easy to conjecture. The Protestant ministers knew that they eventually would be compelled to resign their charges if they found it impossible to divorce their wives. The weak

[1] "Not less than seven times within a few decades," says J. R. Dieterich, "has the population of Oppenheim changed its faith, being compelled to these changes." Quoted by Paulus, *Protestantismus u. Toleranz*, p. 66.

Melanchthon who had held that all deviation from Lutheran teaching on the part of the Anabaptists should be treated as blasphemy, was now of the opinion that the Protestants should accept the Interim, submit to the sovereignty of the Roman Catholic bishops and of the pope and restore the old forms of worship, and practically all the old ceremonies. He urged that it was kind of the Emperor to concede to the Lutherans the above mentioned two points and it were better to accept the Interim than to submit outright to Roman Catholicism. He did not believe that the state churches were minded to bear persecution for their faith, neither did he ask them to do so. To a high dignitary of the Roman Church he wrote (quite truthfully) that he was not responsible for the separation of the Lutheran Church from the Roman Catholic Church.

Martin Bucer, who besides Melanchthon was the most prominent Protestant leader in Germany, was imprisoned on account of his opposition to the compromise prescribed by the Emperor, and in prison at Augsburg he also subscribed to the Interim in order that he might be set free."[2] He was released and returned to Strasburg where he continued his opposition to the Interim. Remarkably enough he found it necessary to defend himself against the charge that his refusal to accept the religion prescribed by the civil authorities, was a proof of Anabaptist tendencies.[3] That such a charge was advanced against him is not surprising in view of the fact that in 1546 he had asserted: To give liberty of religion to those who do not disturb the external political peace, is "an Anabaptist error."[4] Did not the Emperor act in agreement with Bucer's own view when he used his power to suppress that which in his opinion was heresy? Melanchthon and his friends advanced the view that those who refused to be guided by the religious decrees of the

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[2] Roth, *Augsburg's Reformationsgeschichte,* vol. 4, p. 157.

[3] His reply to this accusation was published in 1548. See, Baum, *Capito und Bucer,* pp. 543, 607.

[4] Paulus, *Protestantismus und Toleranz,* p. 174.

civil authorities were guilty of disturbance and uproar.[5] — But the Lutheran princes did not desire to have Romanism restored and to resign their positions as the rulers of the church. Maurice of Saxony turned traitor a second time. Secretly he organized a mighty league against the Emperor and compelled him to guarantee to the Lutherans liberty of worship. Thus ended the period of the infamous Interim.

Menno Simons writes with reference to these conditions:

"The fifth sign by which the true church may be known is a frank, unreserved, faithful confession of Christ's name, will, word and ordinance notwithstanding all cruelty, tyranny and fierce persecution of the world. (Matt. 10:32; Mark 8:38; Rom. 10:10). But where one is Papistic with the Papists Lutheran with the Lutherans, Interimistic with those who accept the Interim; where the Papal doctrines or ceremonies are now abolished and now again adopted, where there is dissimulation according to the command and order of the government — what kind of church this is may be judged of those who are enlightened by the truth and taught of the Spirit of God. [Marginal Note:] The fifth sign by which the true Christian church is known, is upright, valiant confession. Hypocrisy is the fifth sign by which the church of Antichrist may be known. (300a; II:82a).

The greatest religious tyranny prevailed not only in Roman Catholic but also Lutheran and Zwinglian states. Anabaptists were put to death for no other reason than error in doctrine. Menno Simons says:

"Observe, dear brethren, how far the whole wide world has departed from God and His word, ... how bitterly do they persecute, defame, and destroy the eternal saving truth, the pure, unadulterated Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the pious, godly life of the saints. And this is done not only by the Papists and Turks but to a great extent also by those who boast of the holy Word, although in their first writings they had much to say concerning faith, that it is the gift of God and can be created in the hearts of men alone through the Word, for it is an assent of the heart and will.

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[5] Preger, *M. F. Illyricus*, vol. 1, p. 143. Bucer had received urging invitations to come to England and assist in the reformation of the church. He now went to England, where he died in 1551. Five years later, under the reign of Queen Mary, his body was exhumed and burned.

"But this principle has for some years been again discarded by the theologians and, it appears to me, has been effaced from their books. For since lords and princes, cities and countries have identified themselves with their carnal doctrine, they have widely published the contrary opinion, as is fully evident from their own writings. And through their inciting publications and sermons they deliver into the hands of the henchman many God-fearing pious hearts who contradict, reprove and admonish them with the clear word of God and point out to them the true fundamentals of the holy Word, namely the powerful faith working through love, the penitent new life, the obedience to God and Christ and the true evangelical ordinances of baptism, the Lord's supper, and discipline, as Jesus Christ Himself instituted and commanded and His holy apostles taught and practiced. Yes, all who out of pure love insist on this, must be their accursed Anabaptists, disturbers, seducers and heretics; all the pious may expect this at their hands. Nevertheless, one and all of them, be they lords, princes, preachers, theologians or common people, be they Papists, Lutherans or Zwinglians wish to be called the Christian congregation, the holy church." (147a; I: 196a).

"If I hope to find authorities that fear God, rightly perform the office to which they have been called and rightly use their sword, I find indeed mostly a Lucifer, Antiochus and Nero. For they place themselves in Christ's stead in such a way that their decrees must have authority above the word of God. For whosoever does not keep himself according to the contents of their placards, whoever does not serve Baal, whoever observes the ordinances of Christ, whoever performs the requirements of God's word in its fruits, the same must be taken to account and suffer as a seditious rogue, he must be robbed of his possessions, etc. But those who obviously are idolaters, deceivers of souls, libertines, adulterers, deluders, blasphemers, perjurers, profane, drunkards, and like transgressors, are not persecuted, but can live at liberty and peace under their protection. I do not here speak of the good governments which are few in number and little in power [who notwithstanding the imperial mandates are reluctant to persecute the Brethren] but of the evil ones of which there are many." (441; II: 239b)

Frequently Menno Simons points out that the princes would excuse their attitude toward the dissenters by the imperial decree demanding that Anabaptists must be put to death. Emperor Charles V published an edict on January 4, 1528, de-

claring all Anabaptists as well as those who did not in due time present their infants for baptism to be guilty of death according to divine and civil rights. This decree was made a law of the empire by the German Diet (*Reichstag*) assembled at Speier, in April 1529. The mandat passed by the Estates of the empire demanded that "every and all Anabaptists and rebaptized persons, men and women of accountable age, shall be executed and brought from natural life to death by fire or the sword or similar ways of execution, without preceding inquisition of the theologians." All governments which tolerated Anabaptists or refused to carry out this decree were threatened with the severest vengeance. This decree was made a law of the empire with the consent of the Lutheran as well as the Catholic Estates. Luther's own sovereign, the Elector John Frederick, (who succeeded his brother John in 1532), the head of the Saxon state church, not only referred to this decree as an excuse for the execution of the Anabaptists in his own domain, but repeatedly urged the ruler of Hesse to carry out the demands of this cruel edict. He emphasized the fact that it was made a law with his own consent[6] and published it in Saxony. It is worthy of notice that this decree was made a law a few years before the rise of the seditious Munsterite Anabaptists.

Landgrave Philip of Hesse refused to stain his hands with the blood of the dissenters. He asserted that he did not find it in his conscience "to put to death any one for the sake of his faith;" no severer sentences were pronounced against Anabaptists in Hesse, than imprisonment and banishment.[7] The scruples of the Landgrave against the killing of heretics caused embarrassment among the Lutheran theologians of Saxony. One

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[6] Luther himself advised Elector John of Saxony to consent to this decree. He wrote in April, 1529, to the elector in Speier: "That Your Electoral Grace should be obedient to the command of His Imperial Majesty against the Anabaptists and Sacramentarians, is right and Your Electoral Grace should do it willingly; for Your Electoral Grace has or tolerates none of the forbidden doctrines in your own lands, nor do you intend to have or tolerate them." (*De Wette,* vol. 3, p. 441).

[7] Compare, Wappler, *Die Stellung Kursachsens,* etc.

of their number, Justus Menius, wrote, in 1530, a book against the Anabaptists and dedicated it to the Landgrave in the endeavor to persuade him to use severer measures against the dissenters and for this book Luther himself wrote the preface. Luther approved of the execution of persistent Anabaptists. In 1536 the Landgrave of Hesse asked the opinion of the Lutheran reformers concerning the proper treatment of the Anabaptists. In the *Opinion* which was consequently written by Melanchthon but was signed also by Luther the question whether Christian princes are under duty to suppress "the unchristian sect of the Anabaptists," is answered in the affirmative. The reformers refer to the laws of the ancient emperors Honorius and Theodosius which demand that "Anabaptists shall be put to death." If any one "advocated false religious doctrines, as for example on infant baptism, original sin and unnecessary separation .... we opine that in this instance also the obstinate may be put to death."[8] The fact alone that without his protest Anabaptists were executed in Saxony by his own adherents and as it were under his own eyes for no other reason than error in doctrine and "hedge-preaching," shows clearly that Luther was on the wrong side on this question.[9]

"It is well known to many persons," writes Menno Simons, "that some are far more zealous and diligent to urge the law of Theodosius, (although this law was forced from the good emperor by the blood-thirsty bishops), and the mandate of Charles V and the severe decree of the German Empire against those whom they call Anabaptists, which was issued in our time, than to insist on keeping the law of God." (327; II:109).

The emperors Theodosius II and Honorius proclaimed in

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[8] This "opinion" is printed in the Works of Melanchthon, *Corp. Ref.*, vol. 3, p. 195 seq.; also in *Walch, St. L.*, vol. 20, col. 1752 seq. The complete text was published by Hochhuth in Zeitschr. f. hist. Theol., 1858, p. 560 seq.

[9] Compare, Wappler, *Inquisition und Ketzerprozesse* etc.; Wappler, *Die Stellung Kursachsens .... zur Taeuferbewegung;* Paulus, *Protestantismus und Toleranz;* Paulus, *Luther und die Gewissensfreiheit;* Koehler, *Reformation und Ketzerprozess;* Hermelink, *Der Toleranzgedanke,* etc.

413, a law forbidding rebaptism on bane of death. In 428 Theodosius II and Valentinian III published a bloody decree against the rebaptisers who held that the baptism of the Catholic state church was invalid.

It has been asserted that the Anabaptists were, in Lutheran and Zwinglian lands, condemned to death for disobedience to the civil authorities. That all Anabaptists offended against the laws which forbade all dissent from the state church creed must be admitted. The persecution was the inevitable consequence of the prevailing union of church and state. That Luther and all other reformers who consented to state-churchism approved of these laws does not admit of the possibility of a doubt. Menno Simons says concerning the assertion that the severe measures taken against the Anabaptists were due to their disobedience to the civil authorities:

"But now, as I hear, it is claimed that it is not on account of faith but on account of disobedience. As futile as their principle is also that which they advance for its support. Let the authorities command us that which is right, that which is conformable to the Gospel of Christ and the love of our neighbor. If then we refuse to obey, it is right that they mete out punishment." (617a; II:423a).

The Swiss reformers, Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin, entertained the same opinions as Luther touching the principle of liberty of conscience. (Compare Menno's testimony, as quoted p. 80).

Martin Luther in his first endeavors for a reformation clearly appealed to the people. When he, somewhat later, decided in favor of state-churchism, he took the cause of the church reformation from the people and placed it into the hands of the princes. At a time when on his part no beginning had yet been made in the actual reformation of the church, namely in the year 1522 he published his *Faithful Admonition to All Christians to Desist from Disturbance.* Here he endeavors to convince his adherents that it is their bounden duty "to stand still with hand, heart and mouth" until the reformation should be introduced through the civil government. He declared all independent deviation from the prescribed Roman Catholic wor-

ship and practice to be punishable disturbance, and that the necessary changes must be made only upon the initiative of the state. "Those who read and understand my doctrine correctly," he says, "will not make [such] disturbance; they have not learned it of me." (Compare page 21). To give the people a taste of religious liberty and independence would have proved detrimental to the interests of the contemplated new state church. And an attempted abolishment of the Roman worship by the people would have been quite unwelcome to the rulers, even if their attitude toward Lutheranism was friendly. Hence the friends of Luther in countries whose rulers did not accept the Reformation saw themselves compelled to remain within the fold of the Roman Catholic Church, or emigrate.

Menno Simons speaks repeatedly of the policy of the state church Reformers to desist fom introducing evangelical forms of worship and confine themselves to teaching alone until the governments might permit practical reforms. He says:

"Before God teaching with the tongue and letter, if the works indicate the contrary, will not avail, but before Him avails the reality in power and truth. If they then say that this would cause disturbance, I reply again: If they to avoid a disturbance in the world compromise the will and word of the Lord, what kind of pastors and shepherds they in such case are I will let the right minded consider according to the Scriptures." (195a; II:76a).

In his epistle *On the Hedge-preachers,* published in 1532, Luther repeated the assertion that all preachers or teachers who labor in any parish or district without the permission of the pertinent civil and ecclesiastical authorities were the very messengers of Satan and must in no instance be tolerated. In this booklet he also gives interesting information about the manner in which some of the "hedge-preachers" labored. He says:

"It has been reported to me that these sneaking fellows associate themselves with workers in the harvest and on the fields, and preach to them while they are at work, also with the charcoal-burners and others in the forests, thus sowing their seed, scattering their poison and turning away the people from their church. Behold here the very step and manner of the

devil who shuns the light and pilfers in darkness. Is there any one so stupid that he would not recognize them to be the true messengers of the devil? For the Holy Spirit will not sneak, but publicly fly down from heaven. They should be asked: Who has sent you to preach to me,?" etc.[13] Luther disapproved of "hedge-preaching" in Catholic as well as in Lutheran lands.

Needless to say that an argument of this kind did not appeal to the Anabaptists. Melanchthon, in 1536, asked an imprisoned Anabaptist at Jena, Heinz Krauth, "why he and his sect preach in hedges and not publicly in the pulpit, nor come before the people?" He received the striking answer: "The word of God [except when preached in the church houses after the prescribed creed] is cruelly persecuted and we are not permitted to preach. Nevertheless, we must come together, and this we do openly and not secretly [although not before the eyes of those who seek our lives]. And not enough that we are forbidden and hindered to preach the Word, but to be doers of the Word is neither granted us."[14]

Menno Simons and the dissenters in general belonged to the class designated by the theologians of the state churches as hedge-preachers. Menno writes:

"It has come to this through the misrepresentation, upbraiding, and agitation of the theologians that, alas, one can not publicly say anything about the word of the Lord, although it alone is the bread whereby our souls must live." (510; II. 315).

"That we see ourselves compelled at times to preach the word of the Lord and engage in His work at night, I fear, Gellius and the theologians are perhaps the principal cause. For through their inimical, undeserved upbraiding, slandering and defaming they have so embittered and continue to embitter all lords, princes, rulers, and magistrates against us, that we, alas, find it impossible by Scriptural arguments or by our supplications, tears, homelessness, loss of possession and life to move them, etc.

"Notwithstanding this, Gellius and others are not ashamed

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[13] This book is found *Erl. E.*, vol. 31, pp. 213-227; *Walch St. L.*, vol. 20, col. 1664-1677.

[14] *Corp. Ref.*, Melanchthon's Works, vol. 2, p. 1001. Heinz Krauth was executed upon Melanchthon's advice on January 27, 1536, for no other crime than false doctrine and hedge-preaching.

to say that we from fear of the cross secretly enter cities and villages, sit with doors closed, etc., just as if we were stones or blocks of wood which do not nor can have any fear of death; while he and his friends well know that the chosen men of God, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron together with the apostles and prophets .... had so great fear of death that they sometimes took to flight.

"Secondly I say that as long as I have served the God-fearing with my small talent, I have taught more by far in day time than at night. — Behold my reader that which was right and free to Moses, Israel, Christ, the apostles and the whole primitive church, namely to engage in the word and work of the Lord at night, whether this at this time of all cruel tyranny should not be free to us, we will let the intelligent reader judge in the fear of the Lord according to Scripture.

"Since it is manifest that the whole world is so inimically embittered against us, although undeservedly, that we are not suffered to be heard or seen, and many an innocent sheep of the Lord, many a God-fearing one who is not a teacher is led to the slaughter here and there, is without all mercy executed and murdered with the sword, water and fire, and that to us homeless teachers not anywhere under the heavens is given so much as a pig-sty to live in liberty with the knowledge and consent of the authorities, but through public mandates we are judged before we are apprehended and condemned before we are convicted, and since such conditions did to my knowledge nowhere prevail in the times of the apostles, therefore I pray all my readers for God's sake to consider in the fear of the Lord what great injustice Gellius and his friends have done us, through his perverted, bitter words, viz., night-preaching, hedge-preaching, etc., when we can not do otherwise, as is well known ..... We are prepared at all times to render an account of our faith to everyone, and to defend the truth, whenever it can be done in good faith without deceit and secret intent at our lives. (234 seq.; II: 11-13).

"Further we desire that the reasonable reader may take into consideration that a true teacher who preaches the word of the Lord unblamably, can not in our day live or travel openly in any kingdom, country or city under heaven, as far as our knowledge goes, if he be known.

"Besides we see with our eyes that the simple innocent sheep must suffer and be led to the slaughter, though they are not teachers. And the teachers then who are blamed for all and who with Christ are hated above all evil-doers should labor in public in these mad, fearful times of all evil and tyranny. It

would be great folly, for to do so is not required by common sense nor by the Scriptures.

"And although we do not teach in public meetings to which everybody is invited, nevertheless the truth is not kept as a secret but is preached here and there both by night and by day, in cities and countries, verbally and in writing, by life and death. Judges, henchmen, dungeons, fetters, water, fire, sword and stake are witnesses of it.

"In like manner Flanders, Brabant, Holland and Gelders must certainly confess at the last judgment that the word was preached to them in great power; for they, for the sake of the preached word, shed the innocent blood like water. Yea it is preached in those places in such manner that we must well say with Paul: "If our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not." II Cor. 4:3, 4. (515; II:321).

"It is his urging demand that we labor and preach publicly notwithstanding he knows well that it is as impossible for us to do so without losing our lives as it is to go on water without sinking, or to take poison without dying; for alas, he and the theologians have brought it to this, by their ungrounded accusations, that we are alas already condemned to death before we have been apprehended. (260; II:35).

Claus Felbinger, a Huterite evangelist of Moravia wrote in 1560:

"Some have asked us why we came into the country of the Duke of Bavaria to dissuade the people from him. I answered: We go not only into this land, but into all lands, as far as our language extends. For wherever God opens a door unto us, shows us zealous hearts who diligently seek after Him, have a dislike of the ungodly life of the world and desire to do right, to all such places we aim to go and for this we have scriptural ground."[15]

The Huterite Chronicler Caspar Braitmichl wrote in 1570:

"The Christian mission is carried out among us, concerning which the Lord commands and says: 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you,' and again: 'I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go forth and bring fruit.' Therefore ministers of the Gospel and their helpers are annually sent forth into the countries where it is believed that their labors may be crowned with fruit. They visit those who desire to amend their lives, who inquire after the truth and show a zeal

[15] Ottius, *Annal. Anab.*, p. 135.

for it. Them they lead out [into Moravia] at night and day, according to their desire, regardless of catch-polls and henchmen and although many lose their lives in this endeavor.[16]

Christophus Andreas Fischer, the priest of Feldsberg, in his *Fifty-four Strong Reasons* etc., informs us that "those who have already twice or thrice taken their lives into their hands," were as a rule chosen as missionaries. "They travel mostly at night time. They say at first that they are sent only to the poor and plain people. — They read to the people from the little Zwinglian Testament, printed in Zurich, what serves for their devilish deception," etc.[17]

While Luther forbade his followers to labor as "hedge-preachers" in Catholic countries and gave the people no voice in the affairs of the church, he not only laid the right to introduce the Reformation wholly into the hands of the princes and civil authorities, but was also willing to meet "the weak" among the princes half way in the matter of the reformation of worship and practice. The Margrave Joachim of Brandenburg introduced the Lutheran doctrine in his land in 1539, but in order not to hazard the good will of the emperor, he retained nearly all of Roman Catholic ceremonies and practices, including the carrying of the Most Holy in processions; but he accepted the

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[16] Manuscript "*Gemeinde-Geschichtsbuch.*"

[17] *Vier und funfftzig Erhebliche Ursachen, Warumb die Widertauffer nicht sein im Lande zu leyden*, 1607, p. 8. The last sentence of Fischer, concerning the Zurich New Testament is a quotation from Erhard, C., *Gruendliche kurtz verfasste Historia Von Muensterischen Widertauffern*, etc., Munich, 1588, p. 45b. This New Testament was of the original Zurich version which was published prior to the division between the Zwinglians and Swiss Brethren. In later editions various changes were made by Zwinglian theologians. The Swiss Brethren believing the old version the more correct rendering continued to use it. This version was consequently forbidden by the Zwinglian government of the canton Bern. All copies that could be found were confiscated. The Brethren had it reprinted at Basel, Frankfurt on the Main, Leipzig and later at Ephrata in Pennsylvania; hence it was known by the name of Anabaptist (*Taeufer*) Testament while formerly the name of Froschower, the printer of the first edition, was commonly connected with its name.

doctrine of justification by faith and in the Lord's supper the cup for the laity. Luther, when his opinion was asked, said, the old ceremonies may be retained for the time and, said he further, if it pleased the Margrave to do so, he might in the processions "dance and leap" before the Most Holy, as did David of old when the ark was brought to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:14). The preachers of Brandenburg were under obligation to maintain the old superstitious ceremonies. Instead of looking to the Scriptures for guidance, the Margrave was guided by the desire of the Catholic emperor and the preachers by the decision of the Margrave. To disregard the orders of the civil ruler would have been treated as a grave offense. Also in Silesia and in other provinces the church remained under the (nominal) jurisdiction of the Catholic bishops, notwithstanding the limited changes which had been made.

Menno Simons frequently refers to these conditions. Under the marginal title "The clergy and the judges do not serve God, but the princes," he says:

"Beloved rulers, why further multiply words? You do similarly as the priests and preachers who through the instruction of Scripture have come to some knowledge of the truth; but since they love their poor, ease-loving belly more than God, they preach and teach it just to the extent as is specified and permitted in the mandates and decrees of the princes, so that in no case they may incur the displeasure of the world and be not deprived of their worldly honor and easy life. It is the same with you, my dear lords .... in order to maintain the friendship of the emperor and retain your fat revenues (I mean you who are guilty of blood) Jesus Christ with His innocent lambs must without mercy be apprehended, banished, robbed and condemned to death by you, as if He were the ringleader of all rogues and thieves and worthy of torture and shame." (77: I: 110).

Under the marginal title, "The preachers of our time do not serve Christ, but the Princes," Menno writes further:

"How much ever some of them boast of the holy Gospel of Christ, yet, it is not preached except in a deformed and useless fashion, and only to the extent that the worldly princes and governments will tolerate and permit. For as the princes are, so

are the preachers, and as the preachers are, so is the church; and this is carried so far that one must withdraw from Christ Jesus and His holy apostles and disregard their teaching and adhere to the princes and the theologians and believe their word — all on pain of being broken on the wheel, or burned at their hands, or killed and murdered in some other tyrannical way; just as if the preachers should be sent by the princes and not by Jesus Christ" (441; II: 239).

"The foundation of the faith and religion of the [state-church] preachers are the emperor, kings, princes and magistrates; what these order they teach; what these forbid they leave untouched" (157a; I: 202a).

"It is our conviction that in this as well as in all other matters pertaining to conscience, we can not and must not look upon rulers or princes, not upon doctors or masters of the schools, not upon councils of the church fathers or long established customs; for here neither emperor nor king, neither doctors nor licentiates, neither ecumenical councils nor proscriptions have any authority against the Word of God. In these matters we cannot be guided by any person, human authority, human wisdom or time-serving, but we must look alone upon the expressed and clear command of Christ and the pure doctrine and practices of His holy apostles, as has been said above." (17a; I:31b).

In certain states, e. g. Saxony and Hesse, the population was comparatively well prepared for the introduction of the Reformation through the government, in many places the majority welcomed the new doctrines. In other states the change was made quite abrupt and neither the people nor their spiritual advisers were in a position to be benefitted by the new creed. The new doctrine and practice were contrary to what they looked upon as orthodox. They found it impossible to change their religious opinions at the command of the princes. In so far as the Reformation was not welcomed by the people and they were compelled to accept a new faith against their own conviction, the consequences proved sad indeed. There can be no doubt that the doctrine of justification by faith was largely misunderstood and hence fruitful of evil. It is a noteworthy fact that one of Luther's closest friends advanced the opinion

that "good works are injurious to salvation." In the Scriptures justification by faith goes together with repentance and conversion. This fact was largely ignored by the state church Reformers. Yet only in so far as the spiritual condition and the life of the people were improved, was the church really reformed. Menno Simons believed that "with few exceptions" the people were not bettered by the introduction of the state church Reformation. He gives us a graphic picture of conditions as evidently they were frequently found. He says of those who had accepted Luther's doctrine by order of the rulers:

"If any one can simply say with them: Oh, what honorless knaves and villains these desperate priests and monks are! They curse them and wish them the French disease. The wicked pope with his shorn crew, they say, has deceived us long enough with purgatory, confession and fasting; we now eat as we have appetite, fish or meat as we desire[18] for every creature of God is good, says Paul, and is not to be rejected; but what precedes they do not understand, namely to those who believe and know the truth and receive the food with thanksgiving. They further say: How shamefully have they deceived us poor people, that they have robbed us of the blood of the Lord and have pointed us to their merchandise, etc., but, God be praised, we now know that our own works avail nothing, and that the death and blood of Christ alone must blot out and atone for our sins. They begin to sing a Psalm: The snare is broken and we are escaped, etc. [Ps. 124:7.], and while they speak, the beer and wine perchance flow from their drunken mouths and noses. Any one who can but join them in singing this rhime, not considering how carnal his life may be, is a good evangelical man and an acceptable brother. And should ever some one come who in sincere, true love would admonish and reprove them and point to Jesus Christ, to His doctrine, ordinances and unblamable example, and show that it does not become a Christian to carouse and drink, to revile and curse, etc., he must immediately hear that he is a legalist, one who would take heaven by storm, a factionist, a fanatic, a hypocrite, a defamer of the

[18] As early as 1524 Melanchthon wrote: "The common people adhere to Luther only because they think there will further be no duty laid upon them. — Many believe themselves to be very pious and holy when they upbraid priests and monks or eat meat on Friday." *Supplementa Melanchthonia*, vol. 1, pp. 239, 247.

sacrament, an Anabaptist. — Both teachers and disciples bear, as concerns various carnal works, the same cap, as the saying is. I write what I know and testify what I have heard and seen, and I know that I testify the truth" (78; I:112).

"The people they console with the teaching that Christ has paid for our sins, faith alone should have our thought, we are poor sinners and can not keep God's commandments, and similar ease-loving consolations, so that every one selfishly seeks the liberty of the flesh through the new doctrine. — They remain in the old corrupt way of sin, in an unchanged life, without any fear of God, just as if they never in their lives heard one syllable of the word of the Lord and as if God would not punish wickedness and unrighteousness" (293; II:8b).

"Notwithstanding, through the preaching of their compromising gospel, such a wild and reckless liberty is in evidence in all Germany that you can not rebuke them for their open unchastity, intemperance, cursing and swearing, lasciviousness and foul words without being compelled to hear that you are a separatist, vagabond, fanatic, heaven-stormer, Anabaptist and other terms of reproach and insult" (251b; II:29a).

"They [the Zwinglian and Lutheran preachers] have brought the poor, indifferent people to a disorderly, unrestrained, fruitless, impenitent life, just as if never the prophetic or the apostolic doctrine, or the Word of God had been preached, and as if never Christ nor the Holy Spirit had appeared upon earth. Had they with true wisdom and humility known, accepted and followed the Word and ordinance of the Lord and the usage and example of the apostles, and earnestly feared their God; had they not flattered the lords and princes and the world in general, but proclaimed the doctrine in true zeal without any respect of persons, or favor; had they unto death, with faithfulness in doctrine and life, rebuked the sins of all mankind, whether of high or low station; had they in such manner obediently preached and testified of the work and Gospel of God and thus assembled and organized unto the Lord a pious penitent people, that is, a true church, after the apostolic example, and not sought their own gain and ease through it; and had they refrained from abusing those who are pious and fear God, then the precious Word, the glorious Gospel of the grace of Christ would never have been treated so lightmindedly, nor would the poor, unwary people have come into such a wild, dreadful condition as, alas, may now be witnessed everywhere." (236b; II:13b).

What was considered the bounden duty of the state church

preachers, viz., that they must confine their labors to the place assigned to them by the government, was a grave offense in the opinion of the dissenters. Menno Simons often testifies that he was constrained in conscience, through love to God and to the unsaved, to risk his life in the endeavor to spread the evangelical truth. The Anabaptist leader Pilgram Marbeck says of the reformers of Strasburg, in 1532, that they preach only in places to which the protection of the government extends "and not freely under the cross of Christ; therefore their gospel did not bring fruit."[19] Jacob Gross of Waldshut complained that the reformers of Zurich "do not go anywhere. If they were true evangelists, they would go out as the messengers of God to proclaim His word and to point the erring to the true way. But now no one can prevail over them to go forth, neither by petition nor demand, for they have a spirit of fear."[20] "The Gospel will have martyrs," says Sebastian Franck, "but these preachers bark only in their own house where they are secure."[21] Cornelius says correctly that in Catholic countries where state church Protestantism was persecuted, the field was left to the Anabaptists who did not shrink back from dangers of torture and death.[22] On the point of the missionary calling of the church Menno Simons differed from Luther, Zwingli and Calvin who held that the commission to preach the Gospel to all nations concerned only the apostles while Menno believed it to be binding for the Christian church as such.[23]

Although Luther, in his booklet *Of the Hedge-Preachers,* says that these men "preach" to the people who are working in the harvest, in the fields and in the woods, it was evidently their custom to speak to one or a few on the subject of salvation. To refer to personal work of this kind as preaching when

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[19] Schiess, *Briefwechsel Blaurers,* vol. 1, p. 316.

[20] Egli, *Zuericher Wiedertaeufer,* p. 45.

[21] Hegler, *Francks Lat. Paraphrase,* etc., p. 103.

[22] Cornelius, *Muenst. Aufruhr.* vol. 2, p. 44.

[23] Compare Moeller-Kawerau, *Kirchengeschichte,* vol. 3, p. 408, Grisar, *Luther,* vol. 3, p. 1022. Menno Simons will be quoted on the subject of missions.

preaching by laymen was considered a grave offence was not to encourage religious discussions among those who were not ordained ministers. Not a few were of the opinion that uncommon interest in religious questions on the part of the people savored of Anabaptism. In 1548 Matthäus Lother, a member of the Lutheran state church at Zwickau in Saxony wrote:

"If now faith is coupled with love and consequently one who experiences it can not refrain from speaking of it and from praising God: if then the wise and great authorities are informed of it (I speak not only of the Papists but also the Evangelical), such a man must hear that it is said: You are a hedge-preacher, an enthusiast and Anabaptist, you should be forbidden the town; the proper place for that of which you speak is the church. And if consequently the preachers hear of it, they also reprove him, and say: Look, look! How does this enthusiast dare to hold up his head. He has perchance read some German *Kadoechen* and has swallowed the Holy Ghost, feathers and all! And they exhort the authorities to bid him to turn from it and impertinently they say that to talk of such things was not committed to common people and was not becoming for them, and they should let the theologians have a care for these things. — It is true, it should be heard and learned in the churches, but out of the churches it should be practiced and increased. And you say: It is not committed to us; the proper place to speak of it is the church and it is for the preachers. Are these not terrible conditions among pious Christians in these latter times?"[24]

The assertion found in the writings of Menno Simons and other Anabaptists that to lead a pious life meant to incur the suspicion of entertaining Anabaptist views is not based, as has been supposed, on an unwarranted generalization. Heinrich Bullinger, without doubt a reliable witness on the point in question, says: "There are those who are not Anabaptists but have a pronounced averseness against the pomp and frivolity of the world; therefore they earnestly denounce glaring sin and vice and hence are by petulant persons named or revilefully called

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[24] Wappler, *Inquisition u. Ketzerprozesse in Zwickau*, p. 161. The meaning of the word *Kadoechen* is unknown.

Anabaptists."[25] By this testimony of Bullinger the assertion of the Swiss Brethren that zealous Christians of the state church were suspected to be Anabaptists is corroborated. The Brethren, according to Bullinger's further statement said:

"If we, by God's grace, carry into practice and do, believe, teach and live the doctrine which they [the Zwinglians] themselves have at first advocated, we are an abomination to them; they will not tolerate us; they denounce and upbraid us in this our Christian faith as if it were heretical and an error; they call upon the worldly authorities against us and instigate and incite them to persecute and kill us; yea whoever among their own denomination will do and live rightly is given by them the same name as we, namely Anabaptists."[26]

George Wizel wrote in 1531: "Whoever speaks against the wicked customs of the times and urges the need of a Christian life, must be called an evil Anabaptist; many a one knows not how to clear himself of this suspicion except by frequent drinking bouts. For your evangelical liberty has resulted in this, that .... he who earnestly seeks to mend his life, is considered an Anabaptist."[27] Caspar Schwenckfeld testifies repeatedly that a pious life brought the accusation of Anabaptism. "Those who begin an earnest Christian life and live piously," says he, "are generally considered and asserted to be Anabaptists." "I am maligned both by preachers and others to be an Anabaptist, just as all who lead a true, exemplary pious life are now almost everywhere given this name."[28] Johann Valentin Andreae, a theologian of the Lutheran state church, wrote: "Whoever seeks now to lead an irreproachable life, is called an enthusiast, a Schwenckfelder, an Anabaptist."[29]

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[25] "So sind auch andere, welche im Grund nit Wiedertäufer sind, doch heftigen Miszfall haben an der Welt Ueppigkeit und Leichtfertigkeit und darum heftig anklagen Schand und Laster, und dannenher von mutwilligen Leuten Wiedertäufer genämt oder gescholten werden." *Wiedert. Ursprung*, p. 170.

[26] Bullinger, *Wiedert. Ursprung*, fol. 224a.

[27] Cornelius, *Mucnst. Aufr.*, vol. 2, p. 44. Compare Loserth, *B. Hubmaier*, p. 7

[28] *Schwenckfeld's Epistolar*, vol. 2, p. 307; the same, vol. 1, p. 203.

[29] Moeller-Kawerau, *Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 3, p. 386.

The theologians of the state churches, including Luther and other leading reformers, frequently referred to the Anabaptists as "work saints," i. e. legalists who disown the principle of justification by faith and seek salvation through good works. Menno Simons brands this charge as "a wretched untruth" (495; II:300a). He points out the fallacy of this accusation and asserts that this reproachful name was as a rule given those who manifested earnestness and zeal in the Christian life. In his defence against this accusation he does not deny that he and his brethren urge the need of "striving after holiness," but he protests that this is not an evidence of rejecting the doctrine of salvation by grace, and of justification by faith. He says:

"Behold, kind reader, we do not seek our salvation in works, words, or sacraments, as do the theologians, although they make assertions to that effect concerning us, but alone in Jesus Christ and in no other means in heaven or on earth. In this means alone we rejoice, and in no other. We trust, by the grace of God, to abide therein unto death.

"But that we shun carnal works and in our weakness desire to conform ourselves to His word and commandment, this we do [not for the reason that we believe in salvation by works but] because He has so taught and commanded us. For he who does not walk according to His doctrine, bears testimony by his own deeds that he does not believe in Him nor know Him and is not in the communion of the saints.[50]

"The believers are ready in their weakness to obey His holy word, will, commandment, advice, doctrine and ordinances, and thus they show in deed that they believe, that they are born of God and of a spiritual nature. They lead a pious, unblamable life before all men. They are baptized according to the commandment of the Lord, as an indication and testimony that they have buried their sins in Christ's death and desire to walk with Him in newness of life. They break the bread of peace with their beloved brethren as a proof and testimony that they are one with Christ and in His holy church and that they have,

[50] The fact is significant that Menno in some of his earliest books found it necessary to point out that he and his brethren were orthodox on the doctrine of justification by faith although they strove to lead a pious life. This doctrine was largely misunderstood and misapplied in the time of the Reformation.

either in heaven or on earth, no other means of grace and remission of their sins, than the innocent body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ alone which He once for all, by His eternal Spirit in obedience to the Father, has sacrificed and shed upon the cross for us poor sinners. They walk in all love and mercy; they serve their neighbors, etc. In short, they conform themselves in their weakness to all the words, commandments, ordinances, Spirit, rule, example and measure of Christ, as the Scriptures teach; for they are in Christ and Christ is in them; and therefore they live no longer in the old life of sin after the first earthly Adam, but (weakness excepted) in the new life of righteousness which is of faith after the second and heavenly Adam, Christ; as Paul says: 'I do not now live, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me,' (Gal. 2:20); and Christ says: 'If ye love me, keep my commandments,' (John 14:15).

"Think not, beloved reader, that we say this to boast that we be perfect and sinless. By no means. I confess for myself that my prayer is sometimes mixed with sin and my righteousness with unrighteousness. For I feel through God's grace, if only I follow the unction of the Spirit and measure my poor weak nature with Christ and His commandments, what is the nature of the flesh which I inherited from Adam. Yea, if God should judge us according to our worthiness, righteousness, works and merits, and not according to His great goodness and mercy, I confess with holy David that no man could stand before His judgment (Ps. 143:2; 130:3). Therefore let it be far from us that we should trust or glory in anything but alone the grace of our God through Jesus Christ; for it is He alone and none other in eternity who has perfectly satisfied the true righteousness required by God. It is also well known unto us by God's grace, that all the saints of God, from the beginning, have ever deplored their corrupt flesh, as may be seen and observed in the instance of Moses, David, Job, Isaiah, Paul, James and John.

"But for Christ's sake we are in grace; for Christ's sake we are heard, for Christ's sake our failings and shortcomings which are committed through weakness, are forgiven; for with His perfect righteousness and with His innocent death and blood He stands between His Father and His imperfect children and intercedes for all who believe in Him and who strive through faith in the divine Word to turn from evil and follow that which is good, etc.

"Mark, beloved reader, that we do not believe nor teach that we are saved by our merits and works, as our accusers

falsely assert, but alone through grace by Christ Jesus, as has been said before" (462 seq. II: 262 seq.).

"Because we teach from the mouth of the Lord: He who would enter into life, must keep the commandments (Matt. 19:17; Mark 10:19; John 15:10); in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avail but the keeping of the commandments of God (I Cor. 7:19); this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not grievous, I John 5:3; therefore we are called by the preachers heaven stormers and work saints, and must hear that we would be saved by our merits, although we have always confessed and shall through God's grace confess in eternity that we can not be saved by any other means in heaven or upon earth, than alone through the merits, intercession, death, and blood of Christ, as has been fully set forth above.

"Behold, thus have these perverse people changed the very best to the very worst. They do not observe that all Scripture clearly condemns all wanton, haughty despisers and transgressors of God's commandments who plainly prove by their deeds that they are strangers to the saving grace of God, do not believe in Jesus Christ and according to Scripture abide in condemnation, wrath and death (John 3:36)" (512; II: 317).

"But that they say we are hypocrites, and lie concerning us that we assert to be without sin, is, because we teach with all Scripture a life that shows the fruits of penitence; we testify with holy Paul that perjurers, adulterers, idolaters, drunkards, avaricious, liars, unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5), that those who are carnally minded shall die, Rom. 8:13; and with John, that those who sin (understand purposely or wantonly) are of the devil (I John 3:8); and therefore we have in our weakness a heartfelt dismay of such works; so often we have with Moses confessed by mouth and writing and ever will confess, that none is innocent before God, on account of the inborn nature (Gen. 6:5; 8:21), and with Isaiah that we are all as the unclean (Isa. 64:6)" etc. (511; II: 316).

"Behold worthy reader, here you have our doctrine and confession of justification as has been here set forth. Judge for yourself and know that the preachers obviously lie concerning us when they say that we would be saved by our merits and works and that we pretend to be without sin. May the Lord forgive them that they spread such shameless, gross falsehoods. O that these miserable men would once take to heart that the backbiters, slanderers and liars are of the devil (John 8:44) etc.

"This, I say, is our doctrine and by the grace of God will

ever remain our doctrine, for we truly know and realize that it is the invincible word and truth of the Lord. We testify therefore before you and before all the world that, firstly, we do not agree with those who teach and introduce a mere historic, dead faith which is without a change of heart, without Spirit, power and fruit; and secondly we do not agree with those who would be saved through their merits and works." (464; II:264).

To Menno Simons' mind it was an inconsistency that Luther held the pope to be antichrist, but accepted his ordination and baptism as valid.[62] Menno did not admit a fundamental difference between Papism and Roman Catholicism. Was not the pope acknowledged by the Roman Church throughout as its rightful head and representative, possessing divine authority? In Menno's opinion it was a mistake to undertake a reform of Romanism. He says:

"In the second place I say that the same church of which Gellius speaks was not only adulterated and weakened, as he says, but it has become so estranged from God that its members worship, honor and serve gods of wood, stone, gold and silver, also bread and wine, as, alas, has been publicly known these many years in all the temples and houses of worship throughout Europe, and may yet daily be witnessed in many great kingdoms, cities and countries.

"My reader, understand me rightly. That God should not have had His elect among the above named churches, concerning this we do not dispute, but shall in humility leave this both now and forever to the gracious judgment of God, hoping that He has many thousands who are unknown to us as they were to holy Elijah; but the question under dispute is with what spirit, doctrine, sacraments, ordinances and life Christ has commanded to gather unto Him an abiding church and maintain it in His ways" (310; II:94).

"I shall leave it to the judgment of the attentive reader whether that church which is so wholly and entirely possessed and laid waste by Antichrist may be called God's temple. If he gives a negative answer, his judgment is according to Scripture, otherwise many passages of Scripture would be fallible and

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[62] Says Caspar Schwenckfeld: "They err who, although they hold .... the pope to be Antichrist and the greatest heretic, would nevertheless accept his sacraments as valid and consider them equal with the sacraments of Christ." *Corp. Schwenckf.*, vol. 4, p. 196.

false, and it would undeniably follow that God and the devil, Christ and Antichrist were in one temple and ruled one church. — If Gellius' assertions were well founded, it would clearly follow that the church of Antichrist is even now the true Christian church" (309a; II:92b).

"Yes, my reader, Gellius knows as well as I what Christ has commanded us concerning baptism, how the holy apostles have taught and practiced it; again that Paul renewed the baptism in the instance of certain persons who had been baptized with John's baptism (although this was of heaven), because they were not informed concerning the Holy Ghost, also that the worthy martyr Cyprian with all African bishops and the council of Nice did not consider the baptism of heretics valid, etc. Notwithstanding all this, he calls us Anabaptists, never considering that in our infancy we were baptized not only without Spirit, faith, Word, or divine command, but also without all accountability and understanding, with an obviously antichristian baptism, administered by those whom he and other theologians, of his persuasion hold to be antichrists, apostate, heretics and deceivers, who have never truly known God nor His Word and live in open idolatry, bending their knees before wood and stone, trust in the vain and useless doctrines and commandments of men, who wantonly walk according to the lusts of the flesh and worship and honor the creature of God, namely a piece of bread, as the only begotten and eternal Son of God" (232; II:8).

"What is it that deceives and blinds the German countries even today, and what causes them to continue in their ungodliness, if not the inconsiderate doctrine of the preachers, the ill-advised infant baptism, idolatrous supper, and that the commandment of Christ and His apostles concerning separation is not practiced according to the Scriptures. — The people drink and carouse, curse and swear, grasp and tear, lie and cheat. In short the life which is generally in evidence is such as if God were a fabler and His word a fairy tale. Behold, such are the fruits of those who boldly boast that they are the church of Christ. Oh, would to God that they could see what Jesus Christ, after whom they call themselves, and His holy apostles, have taught them in plain words and what example they have left them, that they might be helped. But now there is nothing but playing with the letter, there is the name and boasting, but, alas, the spirit, work, power, and fruits are not apparent" (297 seq.; II:79 seq.).

Many are the complaints of Menno Simons that the state church Reformation failed to abandon some of the leading un-

scriptural principles of Romanism; the changes introduced did not extend to all that is essential to a true evangelical church. He says further:

"We know well that you have destroyed the little gods of Babylon such as the Romish indulgences, the invocation of the departed saints, celibacy, abstaining from meats and similar self-righteousness, idolatry and superstitution. But, alas, the terrible wrongs and abominations have remained, such as the accursed unbelief, the obstinate opposition to the truth, earthly mindedness, the unscriptural infant baptism, the idolatrous supper and the impenitent old life which is of the flesh. — The branches have been cut off in part, but the stem and the roots have remained" (38; I:59).

"But what grieves me most is, that those also who in part have recognized the debauchery of the Babylonian woman and have put away some of her abominations, yet cling to the sophistry of men to such extent that they can be taught or moved neither by God's powerful word nor by the unblamable life, candid testimony and innocent blood of so many pious saints. — For their clamor is for the most part against the pope and his cardinals, bishops, priests and monks. And all who, reproving their deceptive doctrine, idolatrous sacraments and vain life, seek the best for their poor souls, must be upbraided by them as profaners of the sacrament, Anabaptists, fanatics, and heretics" (38; I:58).

The most prominent point of controversy between the Anabaptists and the leading reformers was the question whether baptism is to be administered to believers or infants. At the base of this question lay principles of the most fundamental import.

Infant baptism was a necessary requirement for the maintenance of a state church such as then existed in every state. In every land church and state were united and the membership of the church was supposed to be identical with the population. The people were through infant baptism made members of the state church in their earliest infancy. Not only in Roman Catholic but also in Lutheran and Zwinglian countries every inhabitant (excepting the Jews) was compelled by law to hold membership in the state church; hence infant baptism was the foremost requirement in the Protestant state churches as well as

in the Church of Rome. Excluding or excommunication was virtually unknown except in the instance of heretics who had been condemned to die. Even the criminals who filled the prisons were church members. The creed of the rulers was the creed of the state. The subjects were compelled to profess the faith of the rulers. The masses of the people fashioned their faith to please the authorities, in order to escape the dungeon and the henchman. Those who dared to have a faith differing from the creed prescribed by the magistrates, were subjected to the most cruel persecution which was supposed to be perfectly right. Whosoever killed them thought he was doing God service.

The issue of believers' baptism or infant baptism was one which primarily concerned the conditions of membership in the Christian church. Should the birth of Christian parents convey the right of membership in the church? Should the infants be made church members, or should those only be made members who accepted Christ and surrendered themselves to Him? Should there be exclusive state churches comprising, by virtue of the strong arm of the state, the whole population, or should the precepts of Christ and the example of the apostles be followed? Shall the boundary lines of the church be identical with those of the state? Shall "the sword of the Spirit" rule the church, or the sword of brutal force? Shall the Bible or the henchman be the final authority? Is it the mission of the church to lead those who are within its fold to accept Christ, or is the church a body of believers whose mission field is the world? Shall the church and the world be united or separated? Is the church essentially a hierarchy, or is it a body of believers? These are the questions which lay at the bottom of the great controversy on infant baptism.

Menno points out that the existing union of the church with the state and the world is unscriptural.

"The whole evangelical Scriptures teach that Christ's church was and must be a people separated from the world in doctrine, life and worship. It was likewise in the Old Testament (II Cor. 6:17; Tit. 2:14; I Pet. 2:9, 10; I Cor. 5:17; Ex. 19:12).

"Since the church always was and must be a separated

people, as has been heard, and it is clear as the meridian sun that for many centuries no difference has been observable between the church and the world, but all people have been blended together in baptism, supper, life and worship without any separation, a condition which is so clearly contrary to all Scripture, therefore we are constrained by the Spirit and word of God to the praise of Christ and to the service and betterment of our neighbor from true motives, as set forth above, to gather not to us but to the Lord, a pious, penitent assembly or church .... not by force of arms or uproar (as is the custom of the popular sects), a church which is separated from the world, as the Scriptures teach." (262; II:38a).

"The German church was from the beginning Papistic and not apostolic. The church of which Gellius speaks was first established upon the foundation and abominations of the Papists, and has remained so these many years. It was originally built, not by the apostles upon the foundation of Christ but by the pope on his own foundation and was throughout a Papistic and not a Christian church; and [although changes have been made] it is quite obvious that it has to this hour neither teachers nor congregations nor life nor sacraments, etc., conformable to the commandment, doctrine and ordinance of Christ.

"The preachers should learn first to know themselves rightly, and then preach rightly the word of sincere repentance in the power of the Spirit. All those who accept it with a believing heart and truly repent, should then be served with Christ's sacraments according to divine institution. And those who would wickedly, deliberately despise it, should in the power of the holy word be separated from the communion of their church, without respect of persons, be they rich or poor. In this way they could begin to gather a church unto Christ and in it rightly practice the ordinances of the Lord according to the Scriptures.

"But as long as they baptize the unconscious infants, esteem all whom they have baptized as Christians, dispense the bread to the impenitent, and admit all the avaricious, extortioners, pompous, intemperate, etc., to the fellowship of their church, the world shall continue to be their church and their church the world" (289 seq.; II:70).

The ritualistic features of worship were largely retained by Luther, but utterly rejected by the Anabaptists. Menno held that as concerns faith, practice and worship, the church must conform itself not to the Old Testament but to the New Testa-

ment standard. Under the New dispensation the worship of God is of a purely spiritual nature. The believer in Christ approaches God not through types and shadows, but in Spirit and in truth; hence there is no room for temples of stone, nor altar, nor literal sacrifice, nor incense, nor putting on priestly robes. The Catholic churches in which prayer to saints and the veneration of images were practiced, were spoken of by the Anabaptists as "idol houses." Their worship was exceedingly simple, devoid of all show and ostentation.[63] Luther, to the contrary, in the reformation of worship, was guided by the principle: "What is not contrary to the Scripture, is for it and Scripture is for it," although it may not be established on Scripture authority. "If anything which is in use from times of yore, is to be changed or abandoned," he says, "it is to be and must be proven to be contrary to God's word."[64] In his opinion priestly robes, the elevation of the host, exorcism, etc., were not contrary to God's word. "Erroneously we are accused that we have discarded Mass," says Melanchthon in the *Augsburg Confession,* for it is evident that, to speak without boasting, Mass is held in our churches with greater reverence and fervor, than among our adversaries. — Also in the public ceremonies of Mass, there have been no marked changes except that in some places some of the songs are sung in German."[65] Nevertheless, the sacrificial features of the Mass were abandoned.

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[63] On the question of instrumental music in churches the Anabaptists differed from Luther and agreed with Zwingli and Calvin and the early church fathers who did not tolerate instrumental music in churches. To praise God with stringed instruments was in their opinion a part of Old Testament worship but is foreign to New Testament thought. The passages in the book of Revelation in which musical instruments are mentioned were taken in a similar sense as the verses of the same book mentioning censers and incense; it is expressly stated that these designations are to be taken in a figurative sense. (Rev. 5:8).

[64] *Erl. E.,* vol. 26, p. 269.

[65] "The Lutherans," says a writer of the Reformation era, "take an inimical attitude toward the Papistic Mass and condemn it vehemently; they have on their own authority established their own German Mass — as if it were worse to hold Mass in Latin than in German."

During the Reformation era it was not possible for Mennonites and Anabaptists in general to build houses of worship, except probably in Moravia. And the Huterites of Moravia did not build houses for this purpose, but they had large buildings of various description and found it convenient to use these for their meetings. Christophus Andreas Fischer, the priest of Feldsberg in Austria wrote in 1607 a book: *Fifty-four Strong Reasons why the Anabaptists should not be tolerated in the Land.* His twenty-eighth reason is as follows:

"There never was a heathen so wicked, never Turk so profligate, never Jew so hardened, never heretic so evil, who did not build his god a temple, his Mohamet a mosque, the Jew a synagogue for his worship, the heretic a chapel for the confirmation of his error. But the hypocritical Anabaptists are blinder than the heathen, more profligate than the Turks, more hardened than the Jews, more cursed than all other heretics; for they have no churches or chapels or similar places in which to perform their worship, etc. Yea, before they would build any little church, they would erect a thousand times more dwelling houses, pig-stys and eating rooms (*Fresz-stuben*) which indeed is very amazing, for they desire to be considered quite holy, pious and devoted people. Their sermons they have twice a week in their eating rooms. — No feast of Mary or Apostle day is kept by them. Every Friday in the year they eat meat. Of pictures they have a decidedly unfavorable opinion, except those that are found on the Ducats and Dollars. — They sing the hymns composed by their false messengers who on account of their obstinacy have been either hanged and drowned or singed and burned. Is it not true that they are the most wicked people, having no church, no worship and no sacrifice?" Fischer concludes this book by assuring the princes that their names will be written in heaven if they suppress this heresy.[66]

A point of fundamental difference between Menno Simons and the state-church reformers is the relation of the New Testament Scriptures to the Old. Menno, as well as the Swiss Brethren and Huterites held that the Old Testament precepts were largely intended for pre-Messianic times and have been restated by Christ and the apostles as far as they are to be followed by the Christian Church. They held the Old Testament

[66] Fischer, *Vier und funfftig Erhebliche Ursachen*, etc., p. 78 u. 124.

Scriptures to be the foundation and groundwork for the New, and the latter to be the fulfilment of the Old. In matters of Christian worship and practice the New Testament Scriptures were believed to be the only authority. The union of church and state and other points which were rejected by the Anabaptists on New Testament authority, were defended by Luther, Zwingli and Calvin on Old Testament authority. (Compare citation from Menno Simons on this point, p. 224).

The principle of the Anabaptists that as concerns ordinances, rites, worship and doctrine nothing must be maintained in the church which can not be established on Scripture authority, was originally taught by Luther and Zwingli, but abandoned when they decided upon a union of church and state. On the Wartburg Luther again advanced the Roman Catholic view: "What is not contrary to Scripture, is for Scripture, and Scripture is for it." (Compare p. 123). He held that the old Roman Catholic cultus may be retained without Scripture authority, on the ground that it is not contrary to Scripture. The question what is to be considered contrary to Scripture he answered to the effect that only those things must be abandoned which are expressly forbidden in Scripture. And in his controversy with Carlstadt who cited the second commandment in support of his opinion that the pictures or "idols" (as Luther himself speaks of them) should be removed from the churches, he defended the opinion that everything that is not prohibited in the New Testament Scriptures, although it be forbidden in the Old Testament, may be retained. He says:

"We have taught from St. Paul the Christian liberty, that all things should be free which God does not forbid with clear words in the New Testament .... Now tell me, where has He forbidden to elevate the host. or commanded it? Show me one little word concerning it and I shall yield."[70] "If they can

[70] *Erl. E.*, vol. 29, p. 188; *Walch St. L.*, vol. 20, col. 183. The elevation of the host or bread for the kneeling adoration and worship of the church, was a prominent part in Roman Catholic worship. Carlstadt condemned this custom as idolatry, but Luther defended it because it is not forbidden in the New Testament Scriptures. Only after Carlstadt's death was this practice abandoned in Wittenberg.

prove from the New Testament that the pictures should be removed [from the churches], we shall willingly follow them."[71] "They introduce their own external order concerning which God has given neither a command nor a prohibition, as for instance that one should have no pictures, no churches [i. e. temples], altars, should not use the word Mass or sacrament, not elevate the host, not have priestly garments," etc.[72]

On this principle the old forms of worship and practice were largely retained. The leading reformers asserted that infant baptism and other practices are justifiable because they are not forbidden. Even exorcism, or the conjuration of Satan to depart from the infants previous to baptism, was retained as a custom that is not forbidden in Scripture — to the great offence of the Anabaptists. The form of exorcism used somewhat later among the Lutherans was: "I conjure thee, thou unclean spirit, to come out and depart from this servant of Jesus Christ." Menno Simons denounces repeatedly "the wretched exorcism" and other unscriptural ceremonies connected with baptism, such as breathing upon the infant, giving him salt, anointing him with oil and saliva, etc.

The principle that the Scriptures are the only inerrant source of religious truth, the only authority in matters of faith and pactice — known as the formal principle of the Reformation — was the leading principle of the Anabaptists, while both Luther and Zwingli accepted it only in a modified form. The doctrine of the inner word as held by Hans Denck and a few other Anabaptists, was not shared by the great Anabaptist denominations, viz. the Swiss Brethren, Huterites and Mennonites. As for the Zwinglian reformers, they have frequently asserted that the Anabaptists insisted too much on following the letter of

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[71] *Erl. E.*, vol. 29, p. 150; *Walch St. L.*, vol. 20, col. 147. "It is clear" says Luther further, "that even in the Old Testament the unobjectionable idols [Abgötter] did not bring harm, even if men prayed before them, if only with the heart the true God was worshipped; and our fanatics would bind and entangle us free Christians to such extent that we may not tolerate idols [Götzen] without sin." *Erl. E.*, vol. 29, p. 154.

[72] *Erl. E.*, vol. 29, p. 210.

the Scriptures, "the dead letter." In reply to this argument one of the spokesmen of the Anabaptists in the discussion held in Bern, 1538, asked, "Is that which Christ has said the dead letter?"[73]

The assertion that Anabaptism has an essentially Roman Catholic tendency or that Lutheranism represents a more radical elimination of the unscriptural doctrines of Romanism, is quite untenable. The Zwinglian chronicler Johannes Kessler of St. Gall says rightly concerning the origin of the Anabaptists, that Grebel, Manz, Blaurock, and others insisted on separation from the Roman Catholic Church. They "were of the opinion that those who had been taught the Gospel and were now called evangelical, should first of all forsake and be separated from the Papal church .... But the ministers of the word of God in Zurich, above all Ulrich Zwingli would not consent to such separation."[74] Melanchthon, in the Augsburg Confession, undertook to point out that the Lutheran creed is orthodox according to Roman Catholic standards and authorities. It may be proper to observe that in the opinion of the famous Catholic historian Doellinger Lutheranism is virtually only a branch of the Roman Catholic Church, while Zwinglianism and Calvinism are more radical in their opposition to certain doctrines held to be essential by the Church of Rome and must be considered new churches. Nevertheless both Zwingli and Calvin, as well as Luther, undertook a reformation of the church whose head was the pope. After Luther, in 1522, restored Roman Catholic worship in Wittenberg, Carlstadt spoke of him and his friends as "new Papists," and we know from Zwingli's *Elenchus* that a similar name was given Zwingli by the Swiss Anabaptists. The impartial student will recognize the fact that the reformers who represented the state-church Reformation followed in the footsteps of the Roman Catholic church on certain important points which were discarded by the Anabaptists. They consented to the establishment and maintenance of national churches through

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[73] *Acta Des gespraechs*, etc., fol. 276.

[74] Kessler, *Sabbata*, p. 141.

"the secular arm," they followed "Antichrist," as Menno points out, in their attitude toward those who recognized state-churchism to be incombatible with Gospel principles; they glaringly compromised the principle that the Word of God is the only authority in matters of faith. In the doctrine of the sacraments they differed from the Church of Rome to less extent than the Anabaptists. Through their consent to a union of church and state the leading reformers found themselves compelled to an attitude of compromise in various points of doctrine and practice. The great Anabaptist movement was born of the conviction that the state-church Reformation countenanced unscriptural principles which had been upheld by the former state church and, in short, sustained an unwarranted relation to the position of that body — the Roman Church.

On free will and predestination Menno disapproved of the views advanced by Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. He says correctly that Zwingli in chapter six of his book *On Predestination* asserted, a thief and a murderer were "driven" by God to commit crime and the authorities were "driven" by God to punish criminals for their evil deeds.[75] Of this doctrine Menno speaks as "an abomination above all abominations" (311a; II:94b).

A few writers have asserted that Menno Simons differed from the state churches on original sin. Menno agreed with Martin Luther on the fact of original sin, as will be fully set forth elsewhere by quotations from his writings. He taught that all men inherit a sinful nature from Adam which would exclude them from salvation if Christ, the second Adam, had not atoned for the guilt of original sin. All Anabaptists taught emphatically that no one is condemned for the sin of Adam. Infants are saved, not through baptism but through the atonement of Christ. S. Hoekstra and K. Vos have quoted a sen-

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[75] Compare Steahelin, *Huldreich Zwingli,* vol. 2, p. 460. In the discussions of Embden, in 1578, the (Flemish) Mennonite spokesman Peter of Ceulen quoted extensively from this book of Zwingli, *Protocol: Dat is Alle handelinge,* etc., 1579, fol. 47.

tence from Dirk Philips which is supposed to deny original sin.[76] The context shows this opinion to be erroneous.

Menno Simons had a strikingly good opinion of Martin Luther personally. He says openly that on point of scholarship Luther and others surpass him by far, but protests that he could not take the opinions of these men in preference to the clear teaching of God's Word (404b; II:199a). He criticizes Luther particularly for the arguments which he advanced for infant baptism and because he consented to state-churchism, although in an earlier period he had earnestly defended the voluntary principle. Menno says in his *Foundation* of 1539:

"Luther writes in his sermon for the Third Sunday after Epiphany that infants should be baptized upon their own faith, and if they have no faith, he says, the baptism of infants is nothing but blasphemy of God's sacrament. Is not this a proof of terrible blindness on the part of such a highly learned man through whom God in the beginning has worked so powerfully, that he now attempts to prove that the little infants who can neither hear nor understand may have faith — clearly contrary to his own experience and also contrary to the Word of God."[77]

The doctrine of non-resistance, as held by the Anabaptists, has been largely misunderstood. The supposition that this doctrine is ignored in Roman Catholic and Protestant theology is erroneous. Both the Roman Church and the Protestant churches of the older type recognize the principle of non-resistance to the extent of admitting that Christ has taught it. Nevertheless they do not disapprove of war. The Roman Catholic Church holds that Christ advised non-resistance, but did not comamnd it; hence a Christian may use the sword. Luther advanced a new view which he believed to be far superior to the Roman doctrine. He taught that a Christian must be non-resistant and can have no part in violence or blood-shed, be it in war or in self-defence.

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[76] Hoekstra, S., *Beginselen en Leer,* etc., p. 266; Vos, K., *Menno Simons,* p. 214. The passage is found *Bib. Ref. Neerl.,* vol. 10, p. 92; Dirk Philips' *Hand Book,* p. 45.

[77] *Dat Fundament,* fol. D6a.

But a Christian is also a citizen and to a citizen it is lawful to fight, hence he is under duty to use the sword in self-defence or when the state calls him to arms. This means that when there is no occasion to fight a Christian should be guided by the precepts of Christ on the point of non-resistance; but when such occasion arises he must for the time being ignore the fact that he professes faith in Christ and is under obligation to follow His law; as a citizen he must be guided by civil rights and civil law.

This was the view of Martin Luther, as already said, and it has been accepted by Protestant Christendom as a whole. It is a noteworthy fact that the despised and persecuted Anabaptists and Quakers were for centuries the only Christian denominations which had a distinct testimony against war. Notwithstanding the explicit teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and other portions of Scripture on the point in question, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic theology has justified war as agreeable to Christian principles and has made it the Christian's business to take part in it when occasion presents. The most prominent Christian churches do not materially differ from pagan religions as concerns their attitude toward war. The late Pope Pius X is said to have been much grieved over the outbreak of the great war. Obviously he was moved by human rather than religious considerations. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that war is not essentially unchristian but is in harmony with Christian principles if it is carried on for a good purpose and with a righteous end in view.

The Anabaptists would have disdained the modern view that Christianity is identical with culture and that education, civilization, reform is the real remedy for sin and evil and will eventually make war impossible. Not a few writers have, previous to the outbreak of the greatest of all wars, asserted that civilization has practically outgrown war and is destined to eliminate all other evils. This view left out of consideration some striking pertinent facts, e. g. that in one of the most highly civilized countries men are murdered in times of peace at a rate of nearly ten thousand a year. And the horrible lynch-

ings! Is war a greater evil than the lynchings. Has civilization really outgrown sin and crime?

The Anabaptists recognized that worldly government must be based on physical force, and hence the foundation of the state is radically different from that of the church. They did not accept the opinion of certain modern liberals that the state as such should be established upon moral suasion instead of force, or, in other words, that the state should deal with criminals only through instruction and admonition, the prison doors should be opened and no one further punished for committing crime. The Bible teaches that the state is given the sword to punish evil-doers and it "beareth the sword not in vain." The state would be a farce if it ceased to bear the sword and to use force against those who transgress the laws or who attack the state with arms. Now for the state to defend itself with the sword is war. War is utterly irreconcilable with Christian principles: the fundamental principles of the Christian religion are outraged through war. The fact of war is the most striking evidence of the truth of the Biblical teaching concerning the nature of fallen man and of the world. This means that Christianity, so far as it bears the sword, is a farce, just as is a state that would be based on moral suasion and non-resistance.

The argument that it is inconsistent to refuse to wield the sword when, under existing conditions, the state or society could not exist without it was met by the Anabaptists by pointing out that the fall of the human race is responsible for conditions that make prisons and state authority necessary. No philosophical or theological argumentation can explain away the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has clearly taught by precept and example the principle of non-resistance. To kill men with shrapnell or bayonet is essentially contrary to Christian duty. The arguments advanced to show that war, that "wicked abominable business," as Menno Simons speaks of it, is consistent with Christian principles, can bear no weight to the unsophisticated mind.

X

MENNO'S ATTITUDE TOWARD RATIONALISM

On this subject the most extravagantly incorrect views have been entertained. Various writers, giving evidence to the fact that they have never read Menno Simons' writings, have asserted that he rejected the deity and vicarious sacrifice of Christ, the universality of sin and the doctrine of justification by faith. Menno has been represented as a champion of the modern gospel of the fatherhood of God and the religious brotherhood of men whose burden is that all men are saved although they may not know it. "Modern liberalism," says a certain writer, "has its roots in the Anabaptist movement." The modern view of toleration has also been ascribed to Menno Simons: that matters of doctrine and creed are unessential and the church should not require a defined doctrinal position on the part of individuals or of congregations, that it should not stand for defined truth but that any religious teachings should be acceptable. The assertion has been repeatedly made by modern writers that the early Mennonites disowned doctrinal tests and occupied neutral ground on questions of doctrine. Menno Simons has been represented as an advocate of the autonomy of the church in the sense that every congregation instead of recognizing the Scriptures as the final authority should be "a law unto itself" in matters of faith and principle, and that the church as a whole has not the right to demand of the congregations a certain doctrinal position, and in the congregations the majority should be permitted to rule in questions of faith while the minority should be in duty bound to be satisfied with the decision. A writer in a well known German magazine has asserted that the Anabap-

tists rejected all dogma or authoritative doctrine, and freedom from all religious authority higher than themselves was their leading tenet; they stood for a free general union and brotherhood of men (*freie Vergesellschaftung*).

Now if Menno Simons held such opinions, it would apparently have been inconsistent for him to forsake the national church. He and his friends were a small minority. If the question of doctrine is not of vital importance he might well have contented himself with the doctrine of the church in which he was born and held office. In that case we should be obliged to consider him a leader in an uncalled-for schism. Was it not possible for him in the national church to lead a devoted life and to deviate even from the creed of the church, provided that he did not publicly profess his particular views?

Menno and the early Mennonite churches upheld a well defined standard of faith. No one who has read their own literature, in particular the writings of Menno Simons, can doubt this. The elders Adam Pastor, David Joris (both with a greater or less following) and Francis Reines Kuyper were excluded on account of unscriptural doctrine. Menno Simons was the leading interpreter of the principles and doctrines of the church. His writings were looked upon as a statement of orthodox doctrine and may be said to have served in a measure the purpose of a confession. That the Mennonites had until a later period, no confessions, besides the Scriptures and Menno's writings, is not an evidence of a "liberal" tendency. In our day, it is interesting to observe, a number of the most conservative Christian denominations could be mentioned who say they have no confessions beside the Bible, but it is nevertheless a fact that they hold to a well defined standard of doctrine; they have confessions in very truth, although perhaps unwritten. Of the church in which Menno labored it must be said that the least conservative wing, namely the Waterlandians, were the first to set up a written confession. They differed from Menno in doctrine (although not on fundamental points) and hence his writings were not a statement of doctrine as upheld by them. The more conservative Mennonites who for a long period did

not deviate from Menno's teachings, adopted confessions at a later time.

The Mennonite confessions have been generally ignored in works on symbolics; only Mennonite and Baptist historians have taken them properly into account. The more important Mennonite confessions are:

Waterlandian confessions: 1. The Confession of 1577.[1] 2. The confession of Hans de Ries and Lubbert Gerrits of 1581.[2]

The Frisian Confession, prepared by Peter Janz Twisck (about 1600, according to Van Braght). Thirty-three articles.[3]

The Confession of the Upper German Churches in Holland, prepared by Jan Centsen in 1630.[4]

Confessions of the Flemish churches: 1. The confession of 1626 (Jacques Outerman).[5] The "Olive-Branch," of 1627.[6] 3. The confession prepared by Adrian Cornelis and adopted in 1632 at Dort in Holland, printed frequently in Dutch, German, French and English; various English editions have been published in America.

The date of the confession of the *Old Flemish churches* is uncertain, it is probably after 1650. A German translation was printed in 1768.

A confession prepared by Cornelis Ris was adopted in 1773 by the conference which held its sessions annually in the church called "To the Sun" at Amsterdam. This confession has also been published in the English language.

The Swiss Brethren, in 1527, adopted the seven articles of

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[1] Published by E. M. ten Cate, from a manuscript in the Mennonite Library in Amsterdam, in *D. B.*, 1904, pp. 145-156.

[2] Or probably somewhat later; compare ten Cate, *Geschied. d. Doopsgezinden in Holland*, vol. 1, p. 385. Published in English by McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, Philadelphia. For the Dutch original see Schijn-Maatschoen, *Geschiedenis*, vol. 1, 1743, pp. 238-279.

[3] Printed in *Van Braght*, pp. 360-395. The Baptist Historical Collection in Hamilton, N. Y., has a copy of this confession printed in 1620.

[4] Printed in *Van Braght*, pp. 32-36.

[5] *Van Braght*, pp. 1048-1049. The name Flemish was due to the fact that the first churches consisted principally of fugitives from Flanders.

[6] The same, pp. 26-32.

Michael Sattler at Schlatten am Randen, near Schaffhausen. Of this confession two recent editions have been published (by W. Köhler and H. Böhmer), as well as an English translation.[7] These articles treat only on the points on which the Brethren differed from the teaching of the state churches. The Swiss had no other confesison until some of them (in Alsace) accepted the Dort confession of 1632. It is certain that they agreed with the churches of the lower countries in their attitude toward rationalism and liberalism.

The modern argument that confessions are uncalled for and the church should occupy neutral ground on questions of doctrine, for the reason that neither the Christian believer nor the church as a whole can lay claim to the predicate of infallibility, would not have born any weight to the mind of Menno and his friends. That they were not perfect in understanding was in their opinion no reason for ceasing to defend the great truths of God's word. They were fully decided to repudiate that which is clearly unscriptural and to cling to the Bible teaching on the points in question. They did not profess to have attained to all truth contained in the Scriptures, but admitted cheerfully the possibility of new Scriptural truth to come to them. If we may accept their own confession on this point, they welcomed new light from the Scriptures.

Menno says: "Gellius writes that we should be stopped and silenced, lest the unwary be deceived. I answer: A better and surer way than we have through the grace of the Lord obtained, no one can point out; of this we are fully assured from the inmost of our consciences; for we realize and are fully convinced that we have God's Word. Nevertheless we shall at any time freely offer: if any one who is God-fearing, through the Spirit, word, example, command, prohibition, ordinances and usage of the Lord (in accordance with which in Christ's church everything must be ordered if it be valid and acceptable before the throne of His majesty), and not through tyranny and the power of the authorities, could point out to us in the fear of the Lord that which is in any way more appropriate and better and more conducive to the honor of God and the welfare of His church, than that which we have for a number of years of en-

[7] McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, pp. 3-9.

lightenment confessed and steadfastly maintained in so exceedingly much oppression, homelessness, need and persecution, we shall at any time from our hearts accept and willingly follow it. I am fully confident that all who seek the Lord and fear Him from their heart are of the same mind with me on this point" (235b; II:12b). "By the grace of God I seek nothing whatever upon this earth and shall seek nothing but the unadulterated word of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this according to the record of the Scriptures. Now if I in any way err, which indeed I hope by the grace of God is not the case, I pray every one for the Lord's sake, if any one has more convincing Scripture and more powerful truth, that he through brotherly exhortation and instruction come to my aid, that I may not be put to shame [in the end]. I desire from my heart to accept it, if it is right" (163; I:214a). "If any one under the broad canopy of heaven, be he learned or unlearned, man or woman, can instruct me with clearer Scripture and more powerful truth, gladly will I accept and obey it. But, by the gace of God, we know that we have the sure and true way, which Christ has prepared for us. It is well with us if we walk in it and enter in at the strait gate" (239b; II:17b).

Menno and his friends were guided by the aim to accept and make a part of their creed (written or unwritten) all the truth that through the Scriptures would come to them and to discard everything that is not founded on God's Word. It was their foremost principle that all that may concerning doctrine and Christian practice be found in the Bible should be willingly accepted and followed. They believed the doctrinal position of the national church to be unscriptural and had therefore renounced it. Neither by pope, church fathers, emperor or state authorities they would be guided, but by God's Word alone. On the point of the authority of the Scriptures extensive quotations from Menno will be given in another place.

The church, in so far as it stands for the truth of God's word in doctrine and practice, Menno, according to his own testimony, "loved above everything on earth." A church that does not stand for the truth of God, as revealed in His word, but takes an attitude of neutrality and general toleration on the question of doctrine, has in his opinion no excuse for existence. The supposition that he conceded to every congregation the right

to set up its own creed, or no creed; to stand for any doctrine or no doctrine is quite unfounded. Such a position would be clearly irreconcilable with the emphasis which he laid on the great central truth of the Gospel: that salvation is only through faith in the atonement made by the Son of God through His blood on Calvary and further than the Christian church must be founded upon and guided by God's Word alone. The thought that all religious teaching whether founded on the Scriptures or contrary to them, should be acceptable in the church, was to him a very abomination. To hold that liberty of conscience should mean that the church be given license to disown the authority of God's Word was in his opinion to substitute religious anarchy for liberty. He realized that conscience is not an infallible guide, but is dependent upon the Scriptures for enlightenment and guidance. Hence to substitute conscience for God's Word was to his mind to reject the rightful religious authority.[8]

While in Menno's opinion, conscience if it is not guided by the Scriptures is unsafe to follow, an erring conscience should not and could not be compelled to receive the truth. To set the erring conscience right is not the business of the state through imprisonment and persecution, but it is the business of the church through the Word of God. Menno realized that the great work of maintaining the truth and spreading the Gospel is the task of the church and not of the state. His great concern was that his own conscience and life be perfectly in tune with the Word of his God and that all men whom he found it possible to influence should reach the same goal. While he believed that it is not the province of the state to set up a standard of faith and it is contrary to all Christian principles to establish and maintain the truth through the arm of the flesh and persecute those who would not accept it, he, as already said, differed radically from the idea that the church, like the state, should

[8] At the Fifth International Congress for Free Christianity and Religious Progress, held in Berlin, 1910, J. G. Appeldoorn asserted that the complete independence of conscience was an Anabaptist principle. Appledoorn, *Die Mennoniten,* etc.

occupy neutral ground on questions of doctrine. He must have realized that a church which takes the neutral position on questions of religious doctrine and practice is as much out of place as a state which would be neutral and indifferent on matters of civil law and order, taking, in other words, the anarchistic position. The modern contention that exclusion from the church for any rightful cause is persecution, he would not for a moment have countenanced. He insisted to the contrary that scriptural church discipline and exclusion is "a great work of love," for its purpose is not only to maintain the church in accordance with scriptural principles, but to make the excluded one realize the error of his way and to win him. And an important purpose of discipline was in his opinion to keep the church pure in the wholesome doctrine of the Word. "My brethren," he says, "this is the real reason why and to what end this separation or ban is so earnestly taught and commanded in the holy Scriptures by Jesus Christ and His holy apostles, namely first on account of false doctrine, further sinful, carnal life, and again that the offenders should be admonished."[9]

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[9] 634; II:446. Had Menno lived in our day, he could point to the fact that even the secret orders exclude those who forsake their principles, and no one raises the cry of narrowness or persecution against them.

XI

MENNO ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Besides the practice of infant baptism the absence of scriptural church discipline in the state churches marked a principal point of difference between Menno Simons and the representatives of the state-church Reformation. That every person born within a given state or province should without his knowledge or consent be made a member of the Christian church by infant baptism was to Menno and his friends the first and great evil; and the second was like unto it, namely that all who had thus been "christened" should be compelled by law to hold membership in the church, be they saints or sinners, and that in Lutheran and Zwinglian as well as in Roman Catholic lands offensive sin and vice was not punished by excommunication.

Menno Simons speaks of the exclusion of unworthy members as the ornament of the church. In his opinion a society which did not practice discipline and exclusion was not worthy of the name of a church of Christ. One of the prominent state church reformers, Martin Bucer, it is worthy of notice, although the practice of excommunication was unknown in the church with which he was prominently connected, admitted: "It is true, where there is no discipline and no ban, there is no true church."[1] Both Luther and Zwingli advocated the use of the ban for a time, but after all found it impracticable in the state churches.

Menno defines the church as the assembly of those "who hear, believe, accept and rightly fulfil" the teachings of God's Word. He recognizes a difference between the invisible church

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[1] Hansen, *Geschichte der Konfirmation*, etc., p. 68.

which is the body of Christ and the visible or organized church which can not claim purity in the sense that those who are not right with God may not be found in it (303a; II:86a). The assertion of many church historians that Menno hoped to gather a church which was in the real sense "not having spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:27) must be designated a grave error. To his thinking even those who constitute the mystical body of Christ are not free of imperfection and weakness, in other words, even the invisible church is perfect only in the sense that Christ's perfect righteousness is accounted to the believer. He held that the church as an organization should be "unblamable" in the sense that its teachings are founded on God's word alone, that it stands for all its truth and is conducted and maintained throughout in accordance with it.

Unhesitatingly Menno admitted the possibility that a member of the church be not right with God although he may not give offence that could be followed by discipline. Often he refers to the fact that among the apostles there was a hypocrite. He repudiates the charge that through discipline the church was supposed to be kept pure in the absolute sense, but the fact that the church, consisting of fallible men, can not claim absolute purity was to him no reason why scriptural discipline should be disregarded (305b; II:89a). He believed the church to be "the communion of the saints" in very deed but did not ascribe to it perfection in purity in the absolute sense. Many writers have advanced charges of extreme views concerning the purity of the church against Menno Simons which are quite unwarranted. He says:

"In the fifth place we teach, seek and demand that the Lord's supper be observed as the Lord Jesus Himself has instituted and observed it, namely with a church that is outwardly without spot or blemish, that is without noticeable transgression and wickedness; for the church judges that which is visible. But what is inwardly evil, but does not appear outwardly to the church, as for example the betrayal of Judas, such God alone will judge and pass sentence on them; for He alone, and not the church, discerns hearts and reins" (444b; II:243a).

It is worthy of notice in this connection that in Menno's

opinion not all grievous sin need be publicly confessed. If a transgression is unknown both to the world and to the church, and the guilty one repents and confesses his sin to a brother, Menno did not believe it proper to make the matter public. He writes in 1558.

"Should it at any time come to pass that any one sin against his God in secret in any carnal abomination, from which may He through His power preserve us all, and should the Spirit of the grace of Christ who alone must awaken true repentance in us all, again touch his heart and grant him genuine repentance, of this we have not to judge, for it is a matter between him and God. For since it is evident that we do not seek our righteousness and salvation, the remission of our sins, satisfaction, reconciliation and eternal life in the ban or through the ban, but alone in the righteousness, intercession, merit, death and blood of Christ, and since now the two real objects why the ban is commanded in the Scriptures can not be sought in the instance of such an one, because, firstly, his sin is private, hence no offense can follow from it, and secondly, he is contrite at heart and penitent in life and therefore there is no need of putting him to shame in order that he may be brought to repentance, hence there is no commission of Christ, no divine command that he should be more severely taken to account, nor excluded or brought to shame before the church." (201a; I:350).

The position of the Swiss Brethren and the Huterites on the point in question is set forth in a book of the Huterites, in 1567: *Refutation and Reply to the Swiss, Written Upon their Request.* The last of the *"Fourteen Articles Against the Swiss Brethren,"* contained in this treatise, is as follows:

"Some of them have a false and unchristian opinion and false conception in this, that they say: If perchance some one should have become guilty of sin and vice and if no one knew of it, he might repent of the same sin, and himself ask God's forgiveness, without telling or disclosing it to any one else. Some of them, however do not take this position."

Menno Simons taught emphatically that the ban, being the exclusion of backsliders and transgressors from the church, is ineffective if it is not used on the authority of God's Word

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[2] *Widerlegung und verantwortung den schweitzern Gethan auf ir begeren.* (Manuscript).

against those who through transgression or false doctrine are already inwardly separated from the church; but if, on the other hand, the ban is rightly used, the one who is excluded from the church, is excluded from salvation. (Compare page 276).[3] He writes in 1558:

"It is to be observed in the first place that these heavenly keys are two in number, namely the key of binding and the key of loosing; even as the Lord said to Peter: I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, etc. Matt. 16:19.

"In the second place, we must observe, that the key of binding is nothing else than the word of God's righteousness, the instructing, demanding, constraining, terrifying and condemning law of the Lord, through which all those who do not by faith accept Christ, the only and eternal means of grace, and do not hear His voice, nor follow and obey His holy will, are bound under the curse, sin, death and the wrath of God.

"Again, on the other hand, the key of loosing is the joyous, sweet word of grace, the pardoning, consoling, unbinding Gospel of peace by which all who truly accept Christ as He is revealed in His word, with a firm trust in His innocent blood and death with a regenerated, new, converted, willing, confiding and believing heart, fear Him, love Him, follow and obey Him, are delivered from the said curse, sin, death and the wrath of God.

"In the third place it is to be observed that this binding key is given to Christ's ministers and His people for the purpose that through it they shall in the power of the Spirit set forth unto all earthly, carnal, self-willed and impenitent hearts their great sin, unrighteousness, blindness and wickedness, together with God's righteous wrath, judgment, punishment, hell and

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[3] K. Vos (*Menno Simons*, p. 200) asserts that those who exercised the ban were supposed to "sit in the apostles' seat;" which shows, so this author thinks, that Menno had not yet outgrown Roman Catholic ideas. In the passage to which Vos refers Menno points out that the ban is ineffective and brings only judgment upon those who exercise it "if they themselves have not the spirit of Christ, do not sit in the apostles' seat, do not act from pure motives of obedience to God's Word and of upright brotherly love" (208b; II:262b). The same author says that those who passed judgment concerning the ban, must not be church members but elders (p. 200). This assertion can not be substantiated from Menno's writings; to the contrary it is obvious that as a rule the elders and ministers counseled with the congregation in deciding such matters.

everlasting death, and thus render them contrite, dismayed, humble, broken, penitent, dejected and sorrowful of heart before God and little in their own eyes.

"Again, on the contrary, the key of loosing is given to the end that with it the ministers and people of Christ may direct such contrite, troubled, dejected, sorrowing and broken hearts, which through the power of the first key have been brought to feel and recognize their deep mortal wounds, their defects and sores, to the spiritual brazen serpent, to the throne of grace, to the open fountain of David, to the merciful, compassionate high priest of our only and eternal offering of reconciliation, Christ Jesus, and thus heal their perilous, malignant and deadly wounds, stripes and the bite of the infernal serpent. Therefore this key is likened in its virtue to the consoling olive branch of Noah's dove, to the salve of Gilead, etc.

"Forasmuch then, that it is clearly manifest, that Jesus Christ alone has the key of David and, to the truly, sincerely penitent unlocks heaven, looses the knot of their unrighteousness and grants forgiveness of sins; and again, as it is He who, against the impenitent carnal sinners, closes heaven, binds them under His judgment and retains their sins, and we, in His name, are nothing more than heralds, ministers and messengers who can make the divine precepts neither shorter nor longer, neither narrower nor wider than is taught us by the Spirit and commanded us by His word, as heard, therefore it is fully evident that they greatly err who in the pride of their ignorance suffer themselves to think that they have power to remit or retain the sins of any man that may have been committed against God, or who with perverse, inconsiderate minds out of carnal motives, hatred or bitterness and not purely and solely through the Spirit and Word of Christ, dare to ban or exclude any one," etc. (207; I:261).

"Therefore, my brethren, no one is cut off by us, or separated from the communion of the brethren, but those who have already either by false doctrine or by a blamable life cut themselves off and separated themselves from Christ and His church. For we desire not to exclude any one but to receive; not to cut off but to restore; not to reject but to seek; not to trouble but to console, not to condemn but to save; for such is the true nature and desire of a Christian brother. Whoever turns from evil, be it from his false doctrine or from his vain life, and conforms to the Gospel of Jesus Christ unto which he is baptized, neither shall nor can ever be excluded or cut off by any brethren.

"But those who by admonition, tears, threatening, reproof

or by any other Christian service and godly means can not be raised up and restored, we should, not without great regret and grief, separate from our assembly and thus, in obedience to the doctrine and command of God's Word, exclude the evil of which the erring brethren are guilty, lest we also be led astray by the false doctrine which ever eats as a canker, (II Tim. 2:17) or be influenced by the same vain, carnal life, since the flesh is ever inclined to evil. And thus the separated brother or sister whom we can not help or convert by pleasing services, may by this means of excluding be made ashamed unto repentance (II Thess. 3) and acknowledge to what he has come and from what he is fallen. Thus the ban is a very great work of love, although by those who do not understand it, it is looked upon and considered an act of hatred" (634; II:446).

"After the offending one has been duly admonished in all love, diligence and faithfulness, the exclusion shall take place in the congregation of God with the power of Christ, that is with the binding and losing key of the divine word and of the Holy Ghost. For whenever it be practiced without the word and Spirit, without love and brotherly concern, whether it be through bitterness or anger or on the basis of a false report, not conformable to the Word, or for reasons not deserving the ban, then it is not a work of God, not a medicine to the soul, nor a fruit of pure love, but a contention of Satan, a ruin and pestilence to the conscience and an obvious fruit of the flesh; in short, before God a curse, abomination and stench. Let every person well weigh these words of Paul and he will through God's grace learn how strictly the exclusion is commanded in Scripture and how considerately it should with the power of the word and Spirit of Christ be practiced in the church (345b; II:131b). Menno proceeds to point out that the words of Paul, I Cor. 5:5, "To deliver such an one unto Satan" do not mean that this is done by excommunication, but in the ban announcement is made to the sinner of what has already taken place. (345b; II:131b).

Upon the accusation of Gellius Faber that the Anabaptists were quick and inconsiderate in the matter of discipline Menno replies:

"I repeat: We have extended to them the faithful service of our brotherly love from our inmost hearts by entreating and admonishing them and have patiently borne with some for one or two years expecting the best (292b; II:73).

The Swiss Brethren and the Hutterites, agreed with Menno

on the point that "the true reason why and to what end this separation or excommunication is so earnestly taught and commanded in the holy Scriptures, by Jesus Christ and His holy apostles, is first, for false doctrine; further for sinful carnal life; further that the transgressors may be admonished to repentance, that is to say, those who would be so admonished" (634; II:446). With equal emphasis they insisted on the need of church discipline and excommunication, but differed on the question of the avoidance of the excommunicated.[4]

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[4] A comprehensive historical work giving in full the history of church discipline and the ban among Anabaptists is in preparation.

XII

MENNO SIMONS' DOCTRINE ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

Menno Simons held a peculiar doctrine on the Incarnation: Christ did not obtain His human nature from a sinful child of Adam. God through the Holy Spirit prepared for Him a body (Heb. 10:5). Mary was truly His mother; He is called "the fruit of Mary's womb" in a similar sense as we speak of grain as the fruit of the field (531a; II:337; also folio edition 316a). This doctrine of the Incarnation has been substantially accepted by a number of well known Bible scholars of our time.[1]

Menno says:

If Christ had been, as regards His humanity "of the impure, sinful flesh of Adam, He would through the eternal righteousness of God, be also guilty of judgment and death. And if He Himself owed a debt, how could He pay ours?" (367b; II: 157b). "This selfsame Word .... in due time descended from heaven and through the power of the Most High and of His Holy Spirit, above all human comprehension, became a true

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[1] K. Vos (*Menno Simons*, p. 78) says Menno had no clear conception of this doctrine. The doctrine of the Incarnation as held by Menno Simons is as reasonable as that which is generally accepted as the orthodox view and Menno defines it satisfactorily, but in his answers to the attacks of his opponents he sometimes apparently lost sight of the principle stated by himself: That the incarnation of Christ is not to be comprehended but to be believed. Vos (p. 78) quotes Alenson who gives two passages from Menno which seem to imply a partly contradiction on a phase of the point in question. In Menno's work the said passages are found 368b, II:159b and 370b, II:162a. Reading them in their connection is required for an intelligent understanding.

suffering, mortal man,[2] not of Mary, but in Mary, as John says, the Word was made flesh" (565a; II:371b). To assert that Christ was, in that case, not truly human, says Menno, is to deny God's omnipotence. He replies to the question, Whence, then, has Christ obtained His humanity? with a counter question: "Whence came the abundance of water which flowed from the hard rock? Was it not accomplished above all human understanding and comprehension through God's almighty power, to which nothing is impossible?" (370a; II:161b).

Menno taught that Christ, while in the Incarnation "He took upon Him the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7) did not forego His divine nature. The old charge which has been reasserted by a few modern writers, that he believed the Word to have become flesh by a change in His divine nature, he repudiated as a slander.[3]

"That I have ever said this [that the Word was changed into flesh and that Jesus was only man] no one will, I believe, ever be able to prove; nevertheless they have the courage to say and write such of us. I have spoken of this as the eminent apostle has taught me, namely that the Word was made flesh. This testimony I let stand unbroken and commit the mystery, how much there was changed or not changed, to Him who through His omnipotent power has so ordered it for the salvation of us all. Yet I would add, in my simplicity, if they interpret the said testimony of John, which I have quoted without changing a letter, in such a way as to make it appear that Menno teaches, with John, that the Word has been made flesh, therefore his opinion must be that it was changed into flesh, etc., they should know that change does not in every instance take away the nature of the first substance of which something consists or is wrought. Adam was a man created of earth; and although he was a man thus created, he nevertheless continued to be earth, as the Lord said, 'Dust thou art and to dust thou

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[2] It has been alleged (Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 210) that in Menno's view Christ was not made partaker of our flesh and blood and hence his doctrine of the Atonement was not really orthodox. Menno often points out that Christ was not only divine but also truly human.

[3] The assertion that Menno held this view is made by S. Cramer in *R. E.*, article *Menno Simons*, where it is also said that Menno did not accept the doctrine that Christ was both God and man. On these points compare the quotations from Menno given in this chapter.

shalt return.'—My reader, understand me rightly, I do not present this illustration to assert that the Word was changed into flesh, but I have presented it for he purpose of showing to the reader that even if the Word, in the Incarnation should have undergone a change, even then it nevertheless remained the Word. John 1:14; 8:23; I John 1:2; Rev. 19:13." (368b; II:159b).

"I say that concerning this incomprehensible, sublime subject I do in no wise make reason my counsellor, but set forth the word of my Lord which teaches me in all clearness," etc. (595a; II:398a). "Since He is God's own and true Son and has no other origin but of God, He must also have the nature of the One of whom He is; this is too plain to be controverted" (589b; II:392b). "Although He humbled Himself and for our sakes for a time laid down His divine privilege, right and majesty, notwithstanding this He was God and God's Word" (372a; II:164a). "Christ is truly God and man, man and God" (525b; II:330b; also 363b; II:153b). "I confess both natures in Christ, the divine and the human" (569a; II:375b).

Menno repeatedly asks forbearance of his readers for enlarging on the subject of the origin of life in his defence of the doctrine of the Incarnation. "God knows how unwillingly I do it, but necessity forces me to it" (548; II:353b). He asserts that a new life does not originate from woman, hence Christ's origin, even as concerns His humanity, could not be of Mary. Martin Micron, after his discussions with Menno, wrote to Heinrich Bullinger on March 5, 1556, informing him of Menno's opinion and arguments, and stating that the Zwinglian theologian Musculus was of the same opinion as Menno Simons regarding the origin of human life and indeed had presented this view in one of his books. It is necessary, says Micron, that Musculus be called down and prevailed upon to modify or change his attitude on this question.

"If our adversaries once observed this in the writings of Musculus," he continues, "they would utter the greatest boastings [having found this teaching in our own publications] and would already among all men ascribe to themselves the victory. Great is the authority of Musculus everywhere and if he fur-

nishes our antagonists with such weapons against us, it will scarcely be possible to stop their mouths.—I beseech you .... that you admonish Musculus concerning these things, so that he at the earliest possible opportunity come to the aid of the church that is thus struggling. — If our adversaries dare to oppose us on the authority of Aristotle, what would they do, if they knew that Musculus is on their side, as doubtless they will soon know from his aforementioned work, for Menno is hunting for such things among our own writings, unless Musculus soon concurs."[4]

From another letter of Micron it is apparent that Musculus fully complied with the wishes of his friends and repudiated his former opinion on the point in question.

Menno rejected the view that Christ as to his body was human while as to his mind and soul He was divine. "The Scriptures know of no divided Christ." If He had His human nature from Mary, "He could in such case be not more than half man, namely as concerns His mother's part according to the assertion of the theologians" (Folio edition 316b). "Above all human understanding" the divine and the human nature were united in Him. That this doctrine of the Incarnation has a tendency toward the denial of the deity of Christ was indignantly denied by Menno. On the contrary, his opinion was that what is generally considered the orthodox view dishonors Christ. (367a; II:158a).

Although Menno held that only the regenerated are spoken of in Scripture as brethren of Christ, and for the reason that they are partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4), he repudiated the idea that the regenerated are divine in the same sense as Christ. He says:

"Dear brethren, we do not say, Christ is born of the Spirit, but we say with the Scriptures that He is incarnate and conceived through the Spirit. Now it is a different matter, as you know, to be born of the Spirit and to be incarnate and conceived through the Spirit. Can any one doubt that to be born of the Spirit is regeneration?" (533a; II:339a). "Christ not only calls the regenerated His brethren, but also His children, and

[4] The letter is quoted in full by Ottius, *Annal. Anab.*, p. 123 seq.

says, Behold I and the children which God has given me, Isa. 8:18. They are called His children for the reason that He through the word of His grace, by the power of His Holy Spirit in the sprinkling of His precious blood, has begotten them unto God His Father" (376b; II:170a) "Christ, the Prince of our salvation, has led us to His glory and thus accepted us as brethren and children in the faith" (378b; II:172b). "On account of being born of God, and not for the sake of the birth of Adam, we are His brethren, for the regenerated have one Father with Him" (553b; II:358b). "They are the true brethren of Jesus Christ who with Him are born of God" (425a; II:221b). "For the reason that the regenerated are, with Christ, born of one God and have one Father, therefore He calls the sanctified who with Him are born of God, His brethren, not because of the flesh but because of the new birth. If it were otherwise, you would have to say and admit that all wicked, unbelieving and perverse men and women were brethren and sisters of Christ, as well as the believing, sincere and pious. By no means, for Christ says; Whososoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother" (519b; II:335a).

The said doctrine of the incarnation of Christ was not original with Menno, but was in substance held by the Obbenites from the beginning. The opinion that Menno at the time of his conversion was not acquainted with this teaching[5] is unfounded. In all probability this doctrine was for a time a hindrance standing in the way of his identification with the Obbenites. He writes in 1544:

"When this matter of the incarnation of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ was first mentioned and set before me by the brethren I was, on hearing of it, greatly amazed and startled fearing lest I should err in the matter and be found before God in hurtful unbelief. Yea, on account of this article I was also after receiving baptism many a time so troubled and oppressed at heart, that for many a day through the anxiety of my soul I abstained from food and drink beseeching and praying God in tears and great uneasiness, that the kind Father by His mercy and grace would rightly disclose and open unto me, a poor

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[5] This was the opinion of S. Cramer, *R. E.*, vol. XII, p. 591.

sinner who diligently although in great imperfection and weakness sought to do His good will and pleasure, the mystery of the incarnation of His blessed Son, so far as may be useful and necessary to the glorification of His holy name and to the consolation of my oppressed conscience. Thus straying for days, weeks, and months, I have, concerning the said matter which bore so heavily upon my conscience, discussed and treated with a few who are of your opinion or belief, yet no one could instruct or teach me sufficiently concerning this matter, for gross misunderstanding of certain passages of Scripture which they used to support their assertion I found with them, not according to my mere opinion but according to the testimony of the Scriptures; so that at last, after much fasting, praying, heaviness and anxiety I, through the grace of the Lord was fully consoled and refreshed at heart, assured by the unerring, infallible testimony of the Scriptures, and I sincerely acknowledged and believed that Christ Jesus, forever blessed, is the Lord from heaven. I Cor. 15:47," etc. (525a; II:330a).

Menno Simons points out repeatedly that the controversy concerning the incarnation of Christ was forced upon him by his opponents. In his *Brief Defense to all Theologians* he asks for "a free public debate" with any one of his opponents and gives a list of subjects—ten in number—which should be made the base of the discussions, but does not mention the Incarnation.[6] In his first book on the subject (addressed to John a'Lasco) he urges that it was most earnestly asked and demanded of him to write (Folio edition 527a). In the same book he states that in his discussions with a'Lasco he was against his desire compelled to make this subject a question of dispute (519; II:326a). To treat in this connection on the origin of human life, etc., was distasteful to him. "I am ashamed from my heart, the Lord knows, that I must speak in such a way concerning this great and holy matter; but they compel me to it" (Folio edition 315b).

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[6] 335a; II:119b. Martin Micron in his first debate with Menno complained concerning the omission of this point and insisted that it be made a subject of discussion. Gerretsen, *Micronius*, 1895, p. 44. That the incarnation of Christ is virtually the only point in which Menno was really dogmatically interested, as has been repeatedly asserted (e. g. Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, vol. 4, 1912, p. 270) is without foundation.

He also testifies, in the year 1544, that he avoided to treat on the subject of the Incarnation in his sermons. He writes:

"I say again, this is my confession toward those who most earnestly ask and demand of me a statement of my faith and teaching concerning this article. Yet in my common admonitions to the brethren and friends I never teach it so completely or extensively, nor have I heretofore ever taught it so fully as I have also told you [John a'Lasco] verbally. But I teach in a simple way that the blessed Christ Jesus is truly God and man, a Son of God and a Son of man, conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the pure virgin Mary, became a poor, needy man, like unto us in all things, except sin, etc. Therefore, I say, that I and all teachers can do no better than to teach and set forth this matter of the incarnation and the body of Christ to the common church in a true, simple, apostolic way to the edification, to love, to consolation, to sanctification, to a life in accordance with His precepts and example." "Among us there are doubtless many who fear the Lord from the inmost of their souls and have never in their life heard a syllable in regard to the mystery of this matter, as set forth above with great clearness, and have never inquired concerning it, much less do they know or understand it" (527 seq.; II:332 seq.). "Herewith I conclude this my confession of the Incarnation of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. I write you on this subject in accordance with your desire and place it before you in all clearness, as one who is not ashamed of his faith. Nevertheless I do not teach and treat this matter to such depth in my admonitions to the brethren, or, as said above, have ever done so, but in all simplicity according to apostolic example to edification and love." (533a; II:339).

XIII

MENNO SIMONS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MUNSTERITES

The Munsterite sect rejected infant baptism but differed from the Mennonites on other fundamental points. Under the leadership of John of Leyden, the "second King David" who was to rule until Solomon (Christ) should take possession of the kingdom, they established themselves in the city of Munster in northwest Germany. Not only did they reject the principle of non-resistance but they would destroy the wicked with the sword. They advocated polygamy and ascribed divine authority to their false prophets. After a siege of over a year Munster was conquered on June 25, 1535. John of Leyden and others of their leaders were executed. (Compare p. 41).

One of the first books of Menno Simons is his *Plain and Clear Proof .... Against the Abominable and Terrible Blasphemy of John of Leyden.*[1] The date of this book is not altogether certain. Evidently it was written before his renunciation of the Roman Church, in the period when he, as he later testified, undeservedly had the reputation of an evangelical preacher. To all appearance Menno, when he wrote this book, was only partially acquainted with the teachings of the Munsterites. Probably the date is somewhere in the first half of the year 1535. Menno writes:

"We should not have ventured to write, were there not a

[1] This book was apparently not printed in Menno Simons' time, but was doubtless circulated in manuscript. The first known print, which is very rare, is of 1627. A copy of this edition is in the collection made by the late Elder J. R. Smit, of New Paris, Ind., formerly of Balk, Holland.

pressing need. On the one hand we can not bear the shameful deceit and great blasphemy against God, that a man be placed in Christ's stead; on the other hand those who teach such deceit, yea, abominable heresy concerning the promised David, and similar doctrines refuse to deal with us personally.

"A greater Antichrist than the one who pretends to be the promised David [John of Leyden], can not come. — He who is not blind, understands well what are the weapons with which Christians should fight, namely the word of God. — To fight with carnal weapons is forbidden us. — It is true, God will punish Babylon, but not through His Christians. — The Scriptures clearly testify that the Lord Christ must first come again, before all His enemies shall be punished.

"May all those who would fight with the sword give heed to these words, yea all who would be the angels to root up the tares. Christ indeed expounded this parable differently and says: The good seed are the children of the kingdom .... the reapers are the angels. Inasmuch as the Christians are the good seed, how can they be the angels or reapers; or if they be the reapers, how can they be the seed? These are quite different things, the seed and the reapers; this is plain beyond dispute.

"Christ has not taken His kingdom with the sword, but through suffering; and they mean to take it with the sword! O blindness of man!

Since it is a fact that Christ combats His enemies with the sword of His mouth, He smites the earth with the rod of His mouth; He slays the wicked with the breath of His lips (Isa. 11:4; Rev. 2:16); and since we are to be conformed into His image, (Rom. 8:29), how can we then fight our enemies with any other sword? Does not the apostle Peter say: "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps .... who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously" (I Pet. 2:21).

Some of the opponents of Menno Simons have asserted that in the earlier years of his reformatory labors he held the Anabaptists of Munster to be his "dear brethren" and of one party with himself. Although in his *Plain and Clear Proof* he speaks of John of Leyden as a blasphemer and an anti-Christ and of Munsterite principles as heresy and an abomination, it

was, curiously enough, supposed that this book shows his attitude toward John of Leyden alone, and not toward his followers. In the first edition of his *Foundation* Menno refers to certain Anabaptists of an earlier period who for lack of knowledge were on certain points unorthodox (they were not Munsterites, though Menno's opponents asserted it) as brethren. This has been taken as evidence that he made no real distinction between his own party and the Munsterites. The fact that in the first edition of the *Foundation* he repeatedly addresses also Roman Catholics as brethren[2] has been ignored. The sense in which he in many instances used this expression is clearly indicated when in the same book he speaks of a certain class as his "brethren, but not in Christ Jesus, for those are brethren in Christ who abide in His holy word."[3] Hence if he would have spoken of the Munsterites as brethren (which is not the case, as will be pointed out) this would not prove the point in question.

The opinion that Menno, at the time when he published the first edition of the *Foundation*, considered himself of the same party as the Munsterites is altogether unfounded. There is abundant proof that he was at that time and indeed from the very rise of the Munsterites a consistent opponent of their teaching and believed their sect to advocate even greater errors than the Roman Church. This proof is contained in the above mentioned book against John of Leyden as well as in the *Meditation to the Twenty-fifth Psalm*[4] and in the first edition of the *Foundation*.

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[2] *Dat Fundament des Christelyken leers*, 1539, fol. O3a, R1a, R3a.

[3] The same, fol. R7b.

[4] On the date of this book compare p. 35. K. Vos has overlooked the numerous denunciations of the Munsterites in the *Meditation* and in the first edition of the *Foundation*, which accounts for his opinion concerning Menno's relation to the sect of Munster. He further alleges that between 1539 and 1552 there is no expression of Menno on the point in question. The fact has escaped him that an important pertinent passage is found in the *Loving Admonition*, of 1541. It will be quoted elsewhere.

In the first edition of the *Meditation* Menno Simons says:

"Satan has through the false, unenlightened teachers perverted the spiritual sense of the Scriptures into a carnal sense; he has instituted the sword and weapons and therewith has engendered a revengeful heart against all the world; he has moreover, without any Scripture, cloaked and palliated shameful adultery with the example of the Jewish patriarchs, also a visible kingdom and king and other ungodly errors at which a true Christian is stricken with terror."[5]

A more outspoken rejection of Munsterite principles cannot be found in Menno's later writings. — A passage in this book is directed principally against David Joris the enthusiast, or more correctly, against some of his followers, but applies to the Munsterites as well. Menno says:

"There are those who continuously cry out, grace, Spirit, Christ; but every day they trample grace under their feet, grieve the Holy Spirit and by their carnal life lamentably crucify the Son of God anew. Some of those who had once fled out of Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon and taken upon them the yoke and cross of Christ, have nevertheless fallen prey to the devil; they have been miserably deceived by the false prophets, just as if they had never confessed Thy holy Word; yea, seven evil spirits have taken possession of them (Luke 11:24) and the last deception has become a thousand times worse than the first."[6]

Obviously this means that those who were "miserably deceived by the false prophets" had fallen into greater errors than Romanism. In the later revision the words "a thousand times" in the last sentence have been eliminated.

The first edition of the *Foundation* has a few clear expressions on the point in question, denouncing Munsterite teaching and showing clearly Menno's attitude toward this sect. The very aim, in fact, which Menno had in writing this book was, if we may accept his own testimony as given in the preface, to give proof of the radical differences which separated him and his brethren from the Munsterites. He says:

"Since we find that Satan can convert himself into an angel

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[5] *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm*, fol. D2a.

[6] The same, fol. A6a.

of light and sow the evil tares among the good wheat of the Lord, namely the [Munsterite] doctrines of the sword, matrimony, outward kingdom of Christ, idolatry, deception [pretension to be of the state church when such was not the case] and other errors of similar nature, for whose sake [being accused of such errors] the children of God must in our day hear and suffer terrible things, therefore we have been led to give herewith an account of our faith."[7]

Menno states in this book that there are five religious parties, viz., "Papists, Lutherans, Zwinglians, corrupt sects and Baptizers."[8] The last are the party which he represented while the "corrupt sects" are Munsterites, Batenburgers and Davidians.[9] "Those who have been baptized," he says, "and have again departed from the salutary doctrine of Jesus Christ, have yielded to the deception and error of the false prophets and refuse to accept instruction" are not acceptable partakers of the Lord's table.[10] The false prophets are the leaders of the corrupt sects. These statements show conclusively that Menno by no means accepted the Munsterites as his brethren in Christ.

Concerning the principles of the Munsterites Menno says here:

"We teach, know or acknowledge no King David according to the spirit, but alone the invisible King Jesus Christ to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth who alone is the Lord of lords and the King of kings. But in all temporal things we teach obedience to the Imperial Majesty, to kings, lords and all governments whenever they do not give us command contrary to God's word. — We teach, know and acknowledge no sword than alone the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. — We teach, know and acknowledge no matrimony than that which Christ Jesus Himself and His holy apostles have taught and sanctioned, namely between one man and one woman. — No kingdom of God do we know, teach and acknowledge which is of this world. — We know, teach and consent to no murder and robbery," etc. May the almighty eternal Father through

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[7] *Dat Fundament,* 1539, fol. A4b.

[8] The same, fol. N5b.

[9] That these three parties are meant when Menno speaks of the corrupt sects does not admit of doubt. Cf. 64b; I:94a.

[10] *Dat Fundament,* 1539, fol. G7b.

His beloved Son Jesus Christ keep and guard all faithful hearts from these cursed heresies and abominable errors which are contrary not only to God's word but also to the law of nature."[11]

Further: "I know that they accuse us of [Munsterite] errors concerning king, matrimony, sword, outward kingdom, murder, theft and similar deceptions, which accursed ungodly teaching and Satanic errors, they all say, follow from baptism, and consequently the true doctrine of Jesus Christ, the consecrated life and apostolic baptism is diligently opposed by them. No, dear rulers, no," etc.[12]

The first part of the chapter "To the Corrupt Sects" in the same book also treats of the Munsterites as well as of the Davidites, and shows clearly Menno's position toward them. It will be quoted in another place. And in his *Book on Baptism,* in 1539, (431; II:229a), as well as in another book published in the same year (442b; II:241b) Menno expresses himself to the same effect concerning the corrupt sects, clearly including the Munsterites.

Again in his *Loving Admonition,* in 1541, Menno condemns "the Jewish doctrines of the sword, kingdom, polygamy and other seductions of similar nature" (633b; II:445b). And in his first book addressed to John a'Lasco, in 1544, he speaks of the Munsterites and denounces their teachings in no uncertain tones. He says:

"I have written this in order that our faith, doctrine and life, may be clearly set forth and made known, to destroy the evil suspicion which is held against us in consequence of the pernicious uproar and the shameful doctrine and practice of the false prophets who go forth under a pious semblance ..... as before God who knows our hearts, we are clear of all their abominable doctrine, uproar, mutiny, bloodshed, plurality of wives, and the like abominations. Yea we hate and from all our heart oppose them as acknowledged heresies, as snares to the conscience and deceit, as deception of souls and pestilential doctrine," etc. (519; II:326a).

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[11] The same, fol. P3b.

[12] The same, fol. P.1a.

The above mentioned Anabaptists which erred in a certain matter and were spoken of as erring brethren by Menno, were the so-called Oldcloisterites. In his reply to Gellius Faber Menno gives interesting information on the question of the principles of these people. His own brother had cast his lot with them. When Gellius Faber reproachfully mentioned this fact in his attempted refutation of Menno's doctrinal position, Menno made the following answer:

"My poor brother with whom he so inimically upbraids me has not erred further than that he (alas!) through lack of understanding undertook to defend his faith with the fist and to oppose violence with violence, as is the manner of all theologians, preachers, priests, monks, and the whole wide world." (320b; II:101).

In another part of the same book Menno Simons tells us that the Oldcloisterites "through the ungodly doctrine of Munster" took the sword. It is clear, as will be pointed out, that these people, although they followed the Munsterites to the extent of taking the sword, can not be classed with the followers of the false prophets in Munster. There is not a shadow of an evidence that they approved of the essentially Munsterite doctrine of the destruction of the wicked, of polygamy and of the earthly kingdom of God. The Oldcloisterites did not accept these offensive teachings. As concerns polygamy, it is improbable that they knew that this practice was defended by the Munsterites. Menno Simons, about the time of the affair at the Oldcloister or shortly after it wrote a book against the Munsterites, namely the *Plain and Clear Proof* which was mentioned above. In this book the subject of polygamy is never named or alluded to; in all probability Menno, when he wrote this book was not acquainted with the Munsterite position on this point, and there is every reason to suppose that the Oldcloisterites had no better knowledge of Munsterite doctrine than Menno Simons. Indeed polygamy is to all appearance mentioned and defended in only one of the Munsterite books namely *The Restitution.* Polygamy, it will be remembered, was introduced in Munster by John of Leyden and was with terrible bloodshed maintained by him against the party headed by Mollen-

hecke. After John's purpose had been accomplished, the teaching of polygamy was no longer set forth in the Munsterite writings. It may have been realized by them that their cause was not enhanced in the outside world by the advocacy of this shameful institution. There is no evidence that the Oldcloisterites had become acquainted with *The Restitution.* Whether or not this was the case, they were neither polygamists, nor did they defend the thought of the destruction of the wicked. Clearly they took possession of the cloister, not in order to destroy their enemies, much less to slay eventually all the wicked, but to defend themselves against their persecutors. They did the monks in the cloister no harm whatever, but destroyed the images and altars.

It must be remembered that the death sentence was passed upon all Anabaptists. The poor people were chased down like wild beasts. Only in exceptional cases would recantation save their lives. Many had been killed for their faith. Those Anabaptists who did not hold the principle of non-resistance were under temptation to take the sword in self-defence. Conceivably the example of the Munsterites made an impression on those who were persecuted to death. The Munsterites boasted of their success in defying all the world with the sword. They held that the Lord fought the battles of those who took the sword when they were innocently persecuted. If Munster could defend itself against the powers that be, could not the experiment be repeated in other places? Did not all the world, as Menno correctly observes, assert the right of self-defense? Menno testifies that "after many cruel edicts, after much persecution and slaughter" these people went to the Old Cloister to defend themselfes. (257; I:4).

The said passage on the Oldcloisterites in the first edition of *The Foundation* is contained in the chapter "To the Corrupt Sects." This designation is, as said above, given by Menno to certain enthusiastic and revolutionary sects which by his opponents were classed as Anabaptists, namely the Munsterites, Batenburgers and Davidians. When he published the first edition of his *Foundation,* there were besides these sects only

two Christian denominations found in the Netherlands, namely the Roman Catholic state church and the Brethren represented by himself. There existed also secret bands of Melchiorites, but they had not actually renounced the state church. Hence all unorthodox Anabaptists were found in the ranks of the "corrupt sects." The Oldcloisterites were not classed by Menno under this category, but they had ceased to exist previous to his conversion. He speaks of them in this chapter to show the fallacy of the accusation of the Davidians, that he denounced as corrupt sects all that were according to his understanding not entirely orthodox.

Evidently the Oldcloisterites had formerly been followers of Melchior Hofmann. But while Hofmann did not practice baptism, waiting for the expected time of liberty and the cessation of the persecution, the Oldcloisterites had been baptized; they had become Anabaptists and were therefore in immediate danger of death. Menno held at that time the office of a priest in Witmarsum, but had come to some extent under Melchiorite influence. He admired these people for their willingness to follow the light which had come to them and to step out of the state church under such adverse conditions.

"I saw with mine eyes," he says, "that these zealous people willingly gave their life and possessions for their principles and faith, though they were in error;" they were "a well-meaning, straying flock that would so gladly do the right, if they but knew the right." (257; I:5).

Melchior Hofmann did not teach the principle of nonresistance and Menno Simons points out repeatedly that the Oldcloisterites had never been taught the truth on the point in question; they sinned not against better light but erred unknowingly. For the reason that they followed the truth to the extent as they had received light — that they "would so gladly do the right if they only know what the right is" — that they in the face of untold persecution confessed the truth as far as they had received it, giving unmistakable evidence of the courage of their conviction; for these reasons Menno Simons speaks of them as brethren, but in order to be not misunderstood he

adds, if he could not believe that they were free from Munsterite errors concerning the worldly kingdom of God, their attitude toward "the wicked," polygamy, etc., he would take a different position toward them. He condemned the use of the sword as contrary to Christ's spirit, word and example, and believed the drawing of the sword to be a weighty error in itself, but since these people in self-defence had erred ignorantly, he made the somewhat inconsiderate statement that they "transgressed a little." In the revision of the *Foundation* the whole passage was eliminated.

Menno held that their error should under these circumstances not be too severely charged against them. It is worthy of notice that he took a similar position in regard to certain Zwinglians who gave their lives for the sake of their faith and followed the truth to the extent as they had received it. He says of them: "But that some of them in the beginning for the sake of the testimony which they had obtained, have shed their blood, for this we praise God and believe with James that they are happy [blessed] and that they are our companions in the tribulation of Christ (Jas. 5:11; Rev. 1:9); for their deeds have testified that they sought God and were faithful as far as they had obtained light. (245b; II:24).

It has been supposed that the Oldcloisterites were minded to go to Munster which would indicate that they were Munsterites in principle. But had this been their intention it would be difficult to conceive of a motive why they should go to the Old Cloister and there await attack and siege by the state troops. To the contrary they were of the opinion that the Old Cloister had been given them as a place of refuge against their persecutors, a place where they hoped to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. They believed, since right was on their side, the Lord would give their undertaking success, but overlooked the fact that they transgressed by taking the sword. They referred to the Old Cloister as their Zion, for here they established a congregation of their scattered flock. They wrote letters urging others, "if they loved God and the holy Gospel they should without delay come to them to the Cloister for this

was the sure place of protection which God had given His people for a certain refuge."[13] That the Munsterite Jan van Geelen who organized the uprising in Amsterdam on May 11, 1535, was the leader of the Oldcloisterites is clearly a later invention of their enemies.[14]

K. Vos asserts that Menno's brother who lost his life at the Old Cloister had been in Munster and was a prominent adherent of John of Leyden, being identical with Peter Symonson, one of the twelve elders in Munster and later the steward of the kitchen of king John who was with five others sent forth, in December 1534, to spread the book *On Vengeance* and to promote the Munsterite cause in general. This author has apparently overlooked the fact that Peter Symonson returned to Munster within a few weeks, namely toward the end of December 1534.[15] It is a pure assumption, without any evidence whatever that he was Menno Simons' brother. Were it fact, Menno's opponents would doubtlessly have been informed of it and would have made some mention of it in their books against Menno. And Menno could not have said of his brother than he erred only on one point.

The passage in question which has been supposed to show that Menno considered the Munsterites as brethren of like faith

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[13] *Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. 7, pp. 46 and 368.

[14] The Munsterite traitor Graiss testified that the rulers of Munster had planned "to let four banners fly, one in the country of Julich, one in [the Netherlandish province of] Holland and the Waterland, one between Maestricht, Aachen and in the Land of Limburg, and the fourth in Friesland near Groningen" (*Nederl. Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, 1908, p. 43). Those whom they might bring together in these places should go to Munster to relieve the besieged city. The disturbance at the Old Cloister is not mentioned in connection with the attempts to come to the rescue of the city of Munser. The uproar near Groningen has been described by P. G. Bos, in *Nederl. Arch. v. Kerkgesch.*, 1908, pp. 1-47. John of Leyden testified that Jan van Geelen was sent to the Netherlandish province of Holland by way of Wesel. (Cornelius, *Geschichtsquellen*, vol. 2, pp. 374, 400).

[15] Detmer, H. *Kerssenbrochs Wiedertaeufergeschichte*, pp. 735 and 738.

with himself, and which has reference not to the Munsterites but to the Oldcloisterites, follows:

"I do not doubt that our dear brethren who have formerly transgressed a little against the Lord in so far as they undertook to protect their faith with the sword, have a gracious God. For they were, I hope, not tainted with the aforesaid [Munsterites] heresies. They sought nothing but Christ Jesus and eternal life, and for this cause they forsook all their possessions, their own kindred, yea their own lives, although afterwards they erred a little, as said above, in which respect it behooves us not to follow them, namely, they used weapons other than patient endurance and God's Word. And it is not to be wondered at that they erred at that time, for in those times they had not the proving of the spirits (I John 4:1). The upright and pious I call my sisters and brethren for the reason that they have erred unknowingly. But the double-hearted who did not seek God with a pure heart, although they bore the name of sisters and brethren, and the leaders of the seduction, as for instance those at Munster and Amsterdam, these [who are not now among the living] I leave in the hands of the Lord; He knows what judgment they have deserved and He will judge them according to His holy will."[16]

The passages from the same book as well as from the *Meditation* in which Menno denounces Munsterite doctrine as "accursed heresies and abominable errors" have been quoted above.

Another evidence of Menno's supposed friendly attitude toward the Anabaptists of Munster is stated by K. Vos[17] as follows: "His wife's sister Margaret Edes, was troubled in mind because she had been baptized by the Munsterite minister Douwe Schoemacker, and desired to be rebaptized, but Menno as well as Leonard Bouwens refused her desire."

The only source for this interesting item is Hans Alenson's *Tegen-Bericht,* written in 1630. While K. Vos and others assert that Margaret Edes entertained doubts concerning the validity of her baptism because it was performed by a Munsterite minister, Alenson does not mention this as the cause of

[16] *Dat Fundament,* 1539, fol. R7.

[17] Vos, K., *Menno Simons,* p. 190.

her desire to be rebaptized, but says she believed to have received baptism without faith and repentance.[18] From a letter written by Menno Simons to this person (434; II:401) it is evident that hers was an over-sensitive conscience and she found it difficult to come to an assurance of saving faith.

Alenson refers to Douwe Schoemacker, the minister who baptized Margaret Edes, as a Munsterite. There is absolutely nothing known about this man, except what is contained in Alenson, who wrote about seventy years after Menno Simons' death and probably more than ninety years after the baptism in question. We do not know whence Alenson had his information concerning Douwe Schoemacker, but we do know that he is not always reliable in his statements concerning Menno Simons. There is no proof for the correctness of his assertion that Douwe Schoemacker was not at one with Menno Simons in principle. Margaret Edes was one of the circle in Witmarsum which was influenced by the Oldcloisterites. She may have been baptized by one of their ministers. Even if Menno had accepted Munsterite baptism as valid, an assumption for which there is no evidence, this would not prove the point in question. Luther, Zwingli and Calvin accepted Roman Catholic baptism but were not Romanists.

It has been pointed out above that even before his renunciation of the state-church Menno Simons was a radical opponent of the Munsterites and their teachings. The testimony to that effect contained in the account of his conversion (p. 25) and in his *Plain and Clear Proof* has been cited. In his later writings also we have the repeated and clear testimony that previous to his conversion and from the very rise of the Munsterites he was their opponent. He says:

"Since we against all truth are so severely attacked and accused by our opponents, we will say in defense of us all that we consider the Munsterite doctrine, cause and life, namely concerning king, sword, uproar, striking back, vengeance, plurality of wives, and the outward kingdom of Christ upon earth a new Judaism, a deceptive error, an abomination, radically at

[18] *Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. VII, p. 236.

variance with the spirit, word and example of Christ. Behold, in Christ we lie not. — No one under the broad canopy of heaven can show or prove that I at any time of my life agreed with the Munsterites in the before-mentioned articles; for I have from the beginning until the present time opposed and refuted them with all diligence and earnestness, both privately and publicly, verbally and in writing, yea for over seventeen years and ever since I have in my weakness and according to my ability confessed the Word of the Lord and His holy name, have I taken this attitude toward them" (497a; II:301).

Again Menno says that the places in which he had held office in the service of the state church, namely, "Witmarsum and Pingjum, must acknowledge this and be my witnesses that before my resignation I have earnestly opposed and denounced the Munsterite teaching" (Folio Edition, p. 497a, marginal note).

Concerning his relation and attitude to the Munsterites he says further:

"We are clear and free of the abominable doctrine, uproar, mutiny, bloodthirstiness, polygamy and like abomination of the false prophets. Yea we hate and oppose such teachings with all earnestness as evident heresy, as snares to the conscience, as deception, seduction and fraud and as pestilential doctrines accursed and rejected by all Scripture" (519; II:326b).

"Behold, kind reader, this is my position and confession concerning the Munsterites, and the position of all who are acknowledged and accepted as brethren and sisters among us.

"In short, we confess and testify herewith before God, before you, and before the whole wide world that we from our inmost hearts detest the aforesaid errors and abominations of the Munsterites, of all the world and of evil sects, which are contrary to the Spirit, word, ordinance and commandment of the Lord (497; II:301).

"Our persecutors accuse us and say that we are seditious like the Munsterites and that we are not obedient to the magistracy. To this we reply in the first place: That the Munsterites were seditious and in many things acted without God's word, we confess; but that we should be one with them, we deny. For the seditious abominations such as their teaching concerning king, kingdom, sword, etc., also plurality of wives and dissembling with the world [observing the unscriptural

religious forms prescribed by the powers that be and other similar infamy and abomination we detest and oppose with all our heart" (148a; I:197b).

"It is before God and men unchristian, yea it is manifestly tyrannical and unjust to put us in the same category and impose the same penalty upon us as on the Munsterites, who contrary to God's word and to all evangelical Scripture, also contrary to the existing authorities, established a new kingdom, taught uproar, polygamy, etc., which we so heartily detest and with the word of the Lord denounce, reprove and oppose, as is clearly evident from our whole life and teachings. It is unjust, I say, to put us in the same category with these people alone for the sake of adult baptism which we have so strongly defended with the word of God and the teaching and usage of the apostles against all human philosophy and inventions" (327; II:109).

"And if perchance you should point me to the terrible, abominable record of the false corrupted sects, and say that you must oppose baptism with the sword that thus their wicked undertakings may be prevented and hindered, my answer is, first that Christian baptism is not of the corrupt sects, but it is God's word; secondly that holy Christian baptism does not cause mutiny or shameful deeds, but the false teachers and the false prophets who boast themselves to be baptized Christians and yet, before God, are not such, are responsible for these things.

"Thirdly there is nothing under heaven which I abhor more than the wicked cause of the false, corrupt sects [Munsterites and Davidians]. I do not regard death with such terror, for I know that it is appointed to all men once to die; nor the tyrannical sword, for if they take my body, it is all they can do; nor Satan, for he has been overcome for me by Christ. But if I were tainted by the abominable doctrine of the corrupt sects, my cause would verily be lost, for eternal woe would be to my poor soul. — Therefore I say: If you find in me or my teaching which is the word of God, or among those who are taught by me and my brethren, any thieving, murdering, perjury, mutiny, uproar or any other criminal acts, such as were formerly and are yet found among the corrupted sects, then we desire that you punish us; for we fully deserved the severest punishment in such case" (431b; II:228b).

"Inasmuch as I daily see before my eyes the terrible perils which existed even from the beginning, that so many an innocent soul has been misled and is now misled through the false prophecies, smooth words, seeming sanctity, lying signs, threat-

enings and false promises of the antichrists and false prophets who ever sought their own honor, fame and gain under a semblance of God's word, as was the case with the pope of Rome and John of Leyden at Munster and others, as may yet abundantly be witnessed, therefore I deem it very necessary and profitable to earnestly warn and admonish with a sincere heart all my beloved readers in the Lord, that they should not accept my doctrine as the Gospel of Jesus Christ so long as they have not thoroughly proved it with the spirit and word of the Lord, that they may not set their hearts upon me nor upon any teacher or writer but upon Jesus Christ" (449a; II:248b).

While his opponents asserted that he was of the same party as the Munsterites, Menno Simons points out that among the churches and parties that were known by the name of Anabaptists, greater differences and contrasts were in evidence than among the infant baptist churches. Says Menno:

"As the Papists and Lutherans are not at one but differ from one another, much more do we radically differ from the Munsterites and from some other sects which sprang from them. That this is the truth we have well established for these many years by our writings, life, and oral testimony before lords and princes and before the whole world, also by the blood of many pious Christians which in many lands was shed like water" (148b; I:197b).

Menno Simons shows the unreasonableness of the opinion that all who practiced adult baptism were for that reason of one party. He says:

"We acknowledge, beloved sirs, that some of the false prophets were to outward appearance baptized with the same manner of baptism as we, just as also thieves, murderers, highway robbers, sorcerers and the like were baptized with you. — Shall the good angels be unjustly judged for the sake of Lucifer's pride, and be meted out his punishment? Or are all the apostles traitors for Judas' sake? — Were the apostles responsible for it that the Nicolaitanes had their wives in common, as Eusebius relates? Or that the Ebionites denied the divinity of Christ and taught that Christ did not exist before His incarnation?" (55; II:82).

"If they upbraid us and say that we must be accounted one church and body with the Munsterites, for the reason that we are baptized outwardly in the same manner, we reply: If out-

ward baptism is so powerful as to make those who are outwardly baptized in the same manner all of one Church and body and to cause one to be included in the unrighteousness, wickedness and perversity of another, simply because both have been baptized in the same way, then our adversaries and opponents may well consider what kind of a church or body their's is. For it is clear and well known to every man that even perjurers, murderers, highwaymen, thieves, sorcerers and such like have received the same baptism as they [and moreover under the state church system, were not excluded from the church]. If we, then, are Munsterites for no other reason than because of baptism, then they must be perjurers, murderers, highwaymen, thieves and rogues, for these have received one baptism with them. This can not be gainsaid nor denied. Oh no; the Scriptures do not teach that we are baptized into one body by any outward sign, such as water, but that we are baptized into one body by one Spirit," etc. (497b; II:301b).

In a few of his books Menno Simons states in the preface that his purpose is to show that the accusation against him of entertaining tumultuous and rebellious aims, on the ground that the Munsterites were revolutionsists, was unjust. He points out that not only were the Mennonites not responsible for the deeds of "the corrupt sects," but that certain princes in the churches whose theologians urged such accusations had made more great political, warlike disturbance than all those who were known by the name of Anabaptists. Menno's opponents were well informed concerning uproars made by Anabaptists but memory apparently failed them touching similar sins that were committed by those who were of their own party. At Basel the Zwinglians forced the Reformation on the city and the state through a revolution (1529). Zwingli himself lost his life in an unholy war with the Catholic cantons which were to be compelled to tolerate Zwinglianism, although Catholicism was not tolerated in Zwinglian territority. The leading Lutheran princes, John Frederick of Saxony and Philip of Hesse, in 1542, invaded the Catholic prvoince of Brunswick, conquered the land, drove out Duke Henry, the rightful ruler, and forced the Lutheran reformation upon the people. One of the most worthles characters that was ever called upon to bear the scepter

of a ruler, was the Margrave Albert Alchibiades of Brandenburg-Kulmbach, a Lutheran. As a lawless adventurer he has left a record that was hardly surpassed even by that of John of Leyden. He believed that he was doing God service by killing the priests. Some of the adjoining provinces he covered with conflagration and murder. Finally he was compelled to flee to France. Facts like these will serve to make clear the following quotations from Menno Simons:

"Secondly I would say: Since again and again he [Faber] lays to our charge the errors and uproar of the Munsterites, of which we are and ever have been before God and men innocent and free, I would beseech him that he take a careful look at his own infant baptist church of which he is a head and teacher. How abominably have they for years risen up against each other, with their accursed, wicked wars they have afflicted whole countries," etc. (320a; II:101a).

"Why do they so indiscreetly accuse us of uproar while we are wholly innocent and clear of all uproar and they never pay attention to their own destructive, bloody, murdering uproars, which, alas, have no measure or end, as one may see. — All this they do not notice, yea it must all be accounted right and well done. — Again what bloody uproars the Lutherans have for some years made to introduce and establish their doctrine, I will leave to them to reflect upon. Nevertheless we, although innocent, must be accounted the tumultuous heretics and they the God-fearing, pious, peaceable Christians. Behold so lamentably is the understanding of this blind world darkened" (148b; I:197b).

A comparison of Mennonite with Munsterite principles reveals the most fundamental differences and contrasts. A radical difference existed on the point of the sources of the Christian truth. The Munsterites held the new revelations which, they believed, came to them through their prophets, to be of equal if not greater authority than the Scriptures. They taught that the Old Testament Scriptures surpass the New Testament in authority and importance. Rothmann wrote on the point in question:

"We presume that everyone now knows what is the principal indubitable Scripture, according to which all Scripture must be expounded; namely Moses and the prophets. These

are the authoritative Scriptures. There are also other praiseworthy books which may be called the Holy Scriptures ..... especially the Scriptures or books of the New Testament whose truth is founded on the principal Scriptures." [19]

The New Israel of Munster held the Old Testament to be the most authoritative part of the Bible. Menno Simons, to the contrary, taught that the Old Testament, although a part of God's Word, was, as concerns its rulers of worship and practice, intended for pre-Messianic times alone. All the Old Testament, says Menno, pointed forward to Christ, the author of the New Covenant, who brought the world the full light of the truth and opened the way of salvation for fallen man. Certain points of Old Testament law were expressly abrogated in the Sermon on the Mount. Divorce, for example, was permitted in the Old Testament law, but forbidden by Christ. "Christ is our only lawgiver," says Menno. "All Scripture must be interpreted according to the spirit, teaching, walk and example of Christ and the apostles."[20]

It is worthy of notice that the Munsterite conception of the relation of the Old Testament to the New differs more radically from Menno's conception than from that of the leading reformers. Luther, Zwingli and Calvin did not make the distinction between the Old and New Testament Scriptures on which the great Anabaptist denominations insisted, but held both to be authoritative as the rule of life and practice for the Christian Church. The well known Lutheran theologian, Paul Tschackert, in his work, *The Origin of Lutheran and Reformed Doctrine,* says that Luther "had no historical understanding of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament," and the time of the Reformation was not ripe for this understanding.[21] This opin-

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[19] Rothmann, *Von Verborgenheit der Schrift,* etc., 1535; quoted by zur Linden, *Melchior Hofmann,* p. 352.

[20] 95a; I:65a. Other sentences of similar thought could be quoted from Menno Simons. On this most important principle the state-church reformers differed widely from him.

[21] Tschackert, *Die Entstehung der lutherischen und der reformierten Kirchenlehre,* p. 61.

ion leaves the Anabaptists out of consideration. The great Anabaptist denominations held, on the ground of such passages as Heb. chap. 7-10 and Matt. 5:31-48, that the Old Covenant was imperfect in its law, priesthood, and worship.

Paul Tschackert says correctly that Luther's approval of the bigamy of Philip of Hesse had its basis in his wrong conception of the relation of the Old Testament to the New. Plurality of wives, the darkest and one of the most characteristic points of Munsteritism was more radically and consequentially opposed by the Mennonites than by the new state churches. Among the Swiss Brethren, Huterites and Mennonites transgressors against the seventh commandment were more severely dealt with than in the state churches. Divorce was permitted only in the instance of adultery and the stricter Mennonites prohibited remarriage while the other companion was living. Menno Simons could not have subscribed to Luther's opinion concerning the invalidity of secret betrothal, at least, he held that transgresison must be followed by marriage. He says:

"He that has transgressed and not taken another should bring the disgraced one again to honor, and according to Christian love and the Word of God extricate her from her degraded state." "If you are a Christian or would be one and have seduced a poor child with your subtle temptations and promises, and if you would not lose your soul, you must marry the disgraced one. — Behold this is the Lord's own word and law" (105; I:145).

Heinrich Detmer, the historian whose specialty was, the study of the Anabaptists of Munster says:

"Not with the least semblance of right can it be said that the toleration of, or the demand for polygamy was ever included in the tendencies of Anabaptism as such, or that it corresponded to the religious or other views of the Anabaptists in general. The idea of polygamy, the first attempt to introduce it in Munster, the manner of proclaiming and realizing it, all this was solely a fruit of the brain of John of Leyden.[22]

The state-churchism of the Munsterites led to similar intolerance and persecution as was in vogue in the Lutheran and

[22] Detmer, *Johann von Leiden*, p. 6.

Zwinglian state churches. Liberty of conscience was openly repudiated in Munster. The Swiss Brethren and Mennonites excluded false teachers from the church; the Munsterites persecuted them, threatening them with banishment or the death sentence.[23] Capital punishment even for criminals was believed by Menno to be inconsistent with Christian principles.[24] The Munsterites to the contrary undertook to kill all "the wicked." The Mennonites held that "the powers that be are ordained of God;" the Munsterites believed the governments which opposed them to be not of God but of the evil one.

Menno Simons repudiated the thought that either the members of the church or the church as such is perfect. He did not believe that membership in the church assures salvation. Often he pointed out that there was a Judas among the apostles of the Lord. The Munsterites on the other hand taught that "all Israel will be saved." They held that their Zion was in the absolute sense "without spot or wrinkle" and at the same time they countenanced the most glaring transgression and worldliness. Theoretically there existed communionism in Munster, but the idea on the church as a brotherhood was trampled under feet by John of Leyden. Famine reigned in the city, but John of Leyden, like the Rich Man "clothed himself in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day." The Munsterites were Sabbatarians, keeping Saturday as the day of the Lord.

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[23] The *Articles* of the Munsterites contain the following on the point in question: "In this new temple there must be only one king who shall rule over the people of God and wield the sword of righteousness, in order that the temple may not be stained by any false doctrine, for it is holy." And again: "If a prophet should arise among the people of God who would prophesy falsely and not according to God's Word, such an one shall by the whole congregation be separated and put to death, in order that every ane may realize that the abomination is punished and hated." *Der sogenannte Artikelbrief des Muensterschen Koenigs J. v. Leyden;* von Dr. F. Philippi, in *Zeitschr. f. Kirchengeschichte,* vol. 10, pp. 146-155, article 6. Detmer, p. 765 seq.

[24] Contrary to the opinion of A. M. Cramer (*Menno Simons,* p. 160): that Menno had no objection to capital punishment. Menno expresses himself clearly to the effect that to take human life under any conditions is wrong. A citation is given p. 286.

And why not, if the Old Testament is the rule for Christian doctrine and practice?

It has been commonly supposed that all who were baptized in Munster and those who fled to the city from other places were one in doctrine with John of Leyden. The fact has been practically ignored that more than fifty persons were executed in Munster for the reason that they refused to consent to polygamy and it is well known that those who were put to death were only a minority of the number who were of one mind with them and never became guilty of bigamy or polygamy. And we do not know to what extent the troops of men and women who attempted to go to Munster and aid the Munsterite cause were acquainted with the principles advocated in the city. Nevertheless they are generally spoken of as Munsterites and a Munsterite is supposed to be one who approves of polygamy. To what extremes this thought has been carried is well illustrated by the following example. Gillis of Aachen was (erroneously) believed to have been among a band which on February 28, 1534, was arrested near Duesseldorf for the reason that they intended to go to Munster. On this ground Gillis of Aachen has been represented[25] as a believer in polygamy. But the Munsterites did not defend this offensive institution at that time. In June of the same year John of Leyden for the first time advanced the thought of polygamy. — Polygamy was the result of criminal tendencies in Munster.

It is a curious fact that leading theologians of the state churches asserted that all who insisted on believers' baptism were of the same party with and represented the same cause as the Munsterites. Says Heinrich Bullinger in his great work against the Swiss Brethren in 1560:

"Here I suppose the Anabaptists of our time will say: Not all Anabaptists are minded as these Munsterites whom they themselves do not regard with pleasure, etc. To this I say: But who may trust the Anabaptists of our time [the Swiss Brethren] who would appear so very innocent? — Without doubt God in faithfulness and kindness meant through this Munsterite affair to uncover, for the benefit of the whole world

[25] *De Tijdspiegel*, 1905, p. 359.

and especially His own elect, the great deceptive falseness of Anabaptism and whatever is secretly hidden behind it. Yea God would open the eyes of all ministers of the word as well as of all princes and magistrates, that they may watch the more diligently against these murderous, disguised, crafty wolves and in time, before it be too late, with proper forethought may prevent this evil, lest afterwards, when the Anabaptists consider themselves to have made sufficient preparation, the magistrates may discover the falsity and spurious spirituality of these people which in truth, as is evident from this affair at Munster, is great warlikeness, and may suffer irreparable loss as concerns their soul, honor, body and property."[26]

The view that in the last analysis all Anabaptists represented the same cause and must be virtually considered one party is in our day by no means as general as it once was, but strange to say, is held by some of the latest writers on the subject. The author of the article *Anabaptisten* in the great Herzog-Hauck Theological Encyclopedia says, the Munsterite tragedy represented the summit of the Anabaptist movement and was the fruit of Anabaptist principles.[27] The well known German theologian A. W. Hunzinger[28] thinks the Munsterite development was by no means an extreme growth but a symptomatic manifestation of Anabaptism. In the article on the Anabaptists of Munster in the above mentioned encyclopedia it is said that "considering the final principles, a Munsterite kingdom could impossibly develop from Lutheranism or Zwinglianism," it represented "a legitimate growth on the tree of Anabaptism." [29] The Munsterites themselves were of different view. They did not consider themselves the spiritual children of the early Anabaptists. In their opinion the latter were fundamentally wrong. In their writings the Munsterites name the state church reformers as the beginners of the true reformation of the church, but never mention the early Anabaptists. Luther and Zwingli, they say, have begun the work which Melchior Hofmann, Jan Matthys and John of Leyden completed. If a Munsterite kingdom could not develop from Lutheranism or Zwinglianism, it

[26] *Der Wiedertoufferen Ursprung,* etc. pp. 49a and 46b.
[27] *R. E.,* vol. 1, p. 485.
[28] *Theologie der Gegenwart,* vol. 3, No. 3, p. 49.
[29] *R. E.,* vol. 13, p. 553.

could neither grow out of Swiss Anabaptism. Unless Bullinger's view be accepted that the principle of non-resistance to which the early Anabaptists gave a prominent place, was mere hypocrisy invented to hide revolutionary aims (a view which can not for a moment be entertained by an impartial student) a Munsterite kingdom could not possibly develop from Anabaptism. The principle that the Scriptures are the only authority in matters of faith was accepted by the first Anabaptists more unreservedly and radically than by the Lutherans and Zwinglians, and this principle also made Munsteritism impossible. On the points of the union of the church and state, absence of church discipline, persecution of false teachers, the Munsterites followed not the early Anabaptists but the new state churches.

Hofmann was at first a discipline of Luther; the thought that he was ever connected with the Swiss or South German Anabaptists is a mere assumption. Rothmann, the theologian of the Munsterites, also was originally a Lutheran. And both Luther and Zwingli were originally Roman Catholics. To lay the offenses of the Munsterites to the charge of the Mennonites on the ground that both were Anabaptists is as inreasonable as to accuse the Lutherans of the crimes of which some of the popes became guilty, on the ground that both were infant baptists.

In later periods a number of enthusiastic and immoral sects, much like the Munsterites, issued from the Lutheran and Zwinglian state churches, e. g., the sect of Eva Buttlar, the Zionites in Ronsdorf, and others. It would be unjust to hold the Lutherans and Zwinglians responsible for the errors advanced by those who had once been within their ranks. Menno Simons forcibly points out that the sect of the Nicolaitanes consisted of those who had been members of the apostolic church.

XIV

THE BATENBURGERS AND THE DAVIDITES

After the capture of Munster the Batenburgers perpetuated Munsterite principles and practices. They derived their name from a former burgomaster of Steenwijk, John Theodor of Batenburg, the illegitimate son of a Netherlandish nobleman. The two leading principles of John of Leyden, namely that of establishing the kingdom of God through the sword, and of polygamy were enthusiastically defended by Batenburg. He became the head of a band of revolutionists and murderous incendiaries. After a very short career he was captured and executed in 1537. He is generally considered an Anabaptist, although the baptism of adults was not practiced by himself or by his followers.

A man of far greater influence was David Joris, the head of the Davidians or David-Jorists. He was born in 1501 or 1502, probably at Bruges in the Netherlands. His father was a member of the society of the Rederijkers, and young David is believed to have come under their influence. He learned the trade of a glass painter, married and settled down at Delft. In 1524 he became interested in the problem of church reformation through Martin Luther's writings. Within a few years we find him a zealous Lutheran. On Ascension Day of 1528, when a great procession was held, David Joris accosted the multitude taking part in it, declaring that they erred. He would probably have been killed in consequence, by the mob, had not the burgomaster hastened to his protection. He was arrested and condemned to scourging in the market place and that his tongue should be pierced through with a sharp iron tool, but after an

imprisonment of eleven weeks, he was secretly liberated. It is unknown where he sojourned during the following years. On December 5, 1531 we find him at the Hague, witnessing the martyr's death of Jan Trijpmaker and eight other Anabaptists. They evidently knew him and called to him: "Brother, are you here? Behold here we go out to confess our faith for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." One of them who two years previous had disputed with him on the point of the divinity of Christ asked him whether he remembered the discussion and receiving an affirmative answer, continued: "Now I am quite free and released of it [viz. my doubt] and believe in Christ, my Saviour."

Needless to say that this experience made a deep impression on David Joris. Within a few months he became a Melchiorite. Later we find him in the ranks of the Obbenites, although we do not know when and by whom he was baptized. His talents were recognized and he was ordained to the ministry by Obbe Philips. But only a short time David Joris continued a co-laborer of Obbe. After the rise of Batenburg, the fanciful notion of effecting a union between the Obbenites, Melchiorites and Batenburgers was somehow conceived. It is not known who was responsible for this thought, but it is quite clear that David Joris was the leading person in the convention which was consequently held at Bocholt in Westphalia in August of the year 1536. Neither Obbe Philips nor Menno Simons and probably none of the Obbenites, came to this meeting.[1] Batenburg was not present in person but was represented by a number of his followers. The Munsterite doctrines of polygamy and the kingdom of God were condemned by the Melchiorites who were present. David Joris proposed a compromise. The Batenburger idea of the kingdom of God was not wrong, he held, but the time to establish this kingdom had not yet come; and those of the Batenburgers who were worthy should be baptized. It is supposed that at least some of the Batenburgers who were present accepted these decisions of the enthusiastic

[1] The thought of such a meeting was worthy of the enthusiast David Joris.

David Joris. When their leader, Batenburg, was informed of this compromise, his wrath against Joris who had dared to dictate to him, knew no bounds. He threatened to take his life, because "by his pretended union he made the minds of the people uncertain and consequently undecided to take up weapons to establish the kingdom of God; he was an Absalom who sought to win the people for himself by flattery," etc. The Melchiorites, on the other hand, asserted that David in the last instance advocated the same principles as Batenburg, but was more shrewd in hiding his real intentions; and his undue zeal for union had a tendency "rather to support Batenburg's madness than to weaken it."

About a half year after the meeting at Bocholt, namely in December 1536, or in January of the following year, David Joris had some strange experiences which he believed to be visions from God calling him to be a prophet and the head of the kingdom of God on earth which was to be established. These "visions" were of an offensive nature morally. The Melchiorites, it will be remembered, held that certain practices of the state churches which were contrary to Scripture, may be observed for the sake of the persecution. David Joris went a big step further. From the supposed revelations through the said visions, and from the words of Paul, Rom. 14:20: "All things are indeed pure" (having reference to eating and drinking) and from certain other Scripture verses, he concluded that "the inner man" is not affected by the sin which "the flesh" may commit, and is not responsible for it. Hence to a Christian all things are pure, to sin is impossible and the gross works of the flesh are not unlawful. Although David Joris held that sin is not sin to the Christian, he nevertheless insisted that all sin must be publicly confessed, not only once, but the confession of offensive sin must be repeated until the transgressor does no longer feel a sense of shame, for sin of which he is yet ashamed, said David, is not yet taken away by repentance. He taught that his own writings which were literally inspired, and not the Holy Scriptures, are the highest revelation of God. The first and second Covenant were imperfect, he asserted, Christ Himself had not

brought the world the full truth. The true kingdom of God did not exist previous to David Joris who was called of the Lord to establish it and be its spiritual king. The wicked would perish and those who accepted the message of the prophet were to constitute the kingdom.

The exact date when David Joris became an advocate of these new, strange doctrines is not known. Clearly he was not in harmony with Obbenite teaching when he had the visions spoken of above; even before this, in the meeting at Bocholt his attitude was irreconcilable with the position taken by the Obbenites. He was excommunicated by them, as is clear from his own testimony as well as from Menno Simons' writings.[2] The excommunication must have taken place before Menno's *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm* was written. The date of this book is toward the end of 1536 or early in the following year. The denunciations of the "false prophets" and their teachings, as found in this book are obviously directed primarily against David Joris. (Compare the pertinent quotations on p. 156). Referring to the new doctrines of Joris' spiritual kingship Menno says: "Save use from the deceit of the devil who sets forth the opinion that there should be another king according to the spirit, beside Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, who alone is the King of righteousness and peace."[3] Obviously this sentence does not refer to John of Leyden who had lost his life in the attempt to set up a kingdom, but Menno realized that David Joris followed in the footsteps of the former king of Munster. The context shows that the doctrines denounced by Menno were not dead issues when he wrote this book.

The chapter "To the Corrupt Sects" in Menno's *Foundation,* of 1539, is directed principally against the Davidians. Menno addresses the sect of David Joris as follows:

"I desire now to come to you who through the false proph-

[2] In a tract reprinted by A. M. Cramer, *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkelijke Geschiedenis,* 1846, pp. 308-313, David Joris says, "What, if they have the name and another [Joris] whom they have excluded, has the reality in truth."

[3] *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm,* 1539, fol. D2b.

ets have been so sadly seduced from the true way of Jesus Christ, so that the last error has become worse than the first (Matt. 27:64). For with you it has come to this that, as I understand from your own writings, through your pious appearance, a literal application of [certain] Scriptures and your spirit of error, you would justify the abominable works of the flesh which are clearly contrary to the law of nature, contrary to all prophets, contrary to Jesus Christ and His holy apostles, O my beloved, how far have ye strayed from the house of Israel and from the vineyard of the Lord.

"Say, my beloved, where is there in all the books of the New Testament, in all the teaching of Jesus Christ, one letter by which ye may prove or support one of your articles, be it your doctrine concerning king or sword, polygamy or kingdom [of God], be it stealing, murder, or uproar,[4] be it deception,[5] devilish confession,[6] or to abandon natural shame, etc., which blasphemous, unnatural heresy and diabolic deception, I know well, was formerly accepted by some as good. Whether they yet hold such opinions I do not know, for I know not more than two who are the fathers of your corrupt sect, with whom I have at some previous time had one or two discussions, hoping to win their souls, which however was not realized, although they were with God's Word quite overcome in their points. But to what avail? Your own deceptive appearance must count for more with you, than the express, plain Gospel of Jesus Christ which He has sealed with His own blood. Further I know by reputation, but not face to face, two of your number who are the princes and heads of such errors and sadly seduce some of the ignorant people to a faith and life at which a true Christian must be astounded and terrified.

"I tell you in Christ Jesus' name that no sanctity will avail if we do not abide by the word of the Lord.—Faith must be conformable unto the Gospel. Whoever loves Christ, will keep His word.—He came to testify of the truth and all the children of the truth will hear His voice (John 18:37). If now ye are children of the truth, hear Christ's voice who with His clear

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[4] Principles of the adherents of Batenburg.

[5] The Davidians deceived the world by their attendance of the worship of the ruling churches, having their infants baptized, etc., to show that they were at peace with the state church.

[6] David Joris held, as said abvoe, that all sin must be publicly confessed and the confession must be repeated until the guilty one is no longer ashamed of his sin.

unmistakable word has cursed and condemned your whole endeavor. O how well can the very arch-enemy cover himself with the semblance of a holy life. I tell you of a truth that there avails no holy life except that which is in conformity to the doctrine and the life of Christ. The holiness which does not conform to His doctrine and holy life is no holiness, but indeed an abomination before God.

"My beloved, ye know well that not a tittle could be changed in all the law of Moses until the new Lawgiver came who was promised by Moses and the prophets, Jesus Christ. If now the literal law which was given through the servant and sealed with the blood of calves and goats had such authority and strength, how much more authoritative and unchangeable is the law of Jesus Christ which is free, spiritual, eternal, given through the Son and sealed by His blood!

"They were all false prophets who taught anything contrary to the law of Moses, for they were commanded not to take away from or add to his word, but that which he commanded them they should keep and be guided by it (Deut. 12). So also today those who would teach us something contrary to the teaching which we have been taught and received of Jesus Christ and His holy apostles, are false prophets, may they have ever so holy a semblance.

"Since then your ears are itching for the lies and ye do not regard the plain teachings of Jesus Christ, but stop His blessed lips and will not hear those who would lead you to the true pastures of Israel, therefore God has smitten you with a mad, blind spirit, that ye stray from one evil doctrine to another, from one false prophet to another, and so miserably leave the true foundation which can never move nor give way, which is Jesus Christ.—For any and all those who have taught and prophesied new things contrary to the teachings of Christ, have been found false and liars in their teachings and prophecies.

"I entreat you that you regard not any one's supposed sanctity; there avails no sanctity outside of God's word.—I tell you again of a truth that neither life nor power will avail, if ye have not the word and spirit of Jesus Chrst. If ye have Christ's spirit, ye must be conformed to His teaching, for His teaching is not changed to another intent, and if your spirit differs from the word of Christ, know of a surety that it is the spirit of Antichrist, and that ye are those from which Christ Jesus and His holy apostles have so earnestly warned us, as said above.

"With this I pray you from a pitying, burning heart, through the mercy of God, whoever ye may be, that ye may at

last have the deceptive blindness removed from your eyes, confess your sad error, seek those who may break to you the bread of life, hold Jesus Christ to be the only elect, precious corner stone laid in the foundation of Zion upon whom alone we must build. Seek alone His pure, true, plain truth, submit yourselves to His holy gospel, that the eternal truth and the clear teaching of the Scripture may no more for your sakes be blasphemed by this blind world, and that ye may not suffer as thieves and murderers or as evil doers, but that ye may suffer as Christians and thus bear the cross of Christ to His praise and glory and obtain the crown of glory which is given all who live and suffer according to His divine blessed will. With this I would before God and all the world be innocent of your blood and condemnation. Be earnestly warned and awake and realize your danger."[7]

That this chapter was addressed to David Joris and his followers does not admit of any doubt. Joris fully understood and realized it. The arrogant enthusiast, after reading it, wrote to Menno Simons a letter as follows:

"Gird on your sword, o Menno Simons, tie it to your side and strengthen your hand, arm yourself with an armor, breastplate, helmet, shield, and with the strongest scriptural weapons; stand up as a man and defend yourself, for I shall attack you, yet not as an enemy but as your best friend on earth It is as I say, give attention!

"Can you fight? Have you seen a battle? This is merely a beginning, a sort of prelude, that I may not surprise you, but make you attentive, pliable, and meek for your own good, that you may listen to my words and understand the truth with proper discernment.

"Who has advised you, Menno, to step forth so proudly against the Lord, that you extol yourself above all? Say, dear man, what spirit or witness advices you to teach? Who has sent you? Answer me, if you are one of the angels, one sent of God.

"Since you are uncertain in this matter and are learned in the Scriptures only, you shall be put to shame.—If you do not

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[7] *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers*, 1539, fol. R3b—S1a. In the first edition of the book *Of the True Christian Faith and its Power* (probably, 1541) Menno speaks of the *Davidiani* as one of the "corrupt churches or sects which are found in all evil, ungodly and carnal fruits or works" (*Van dat rechte Christen Gheloue ende zijn cracht*, fol. O7a).

believe me and do not consent to be taught the truth as a little child, you shall regret it.

"Defend yourself now as a man. If you can, make me a liar and put my word at naught. I have experienced so much praise and ignominy that I am beyond shame, just as Zerubbabel [who was called to build the second temple] should be.

"I shall show you that you do not know God's word, although you fully believe that you have it; nor do you know what is truth and wisdom, except according to the letter.—Therefore forsake your own understanding and believe the eternal truth in the Spirit which judges all things rightly.

"If you seek the praise and glory of God alone and not your own, forsake your own shame. To save your soul be not ashamed to confess to your erring understanding, your childishness and your stupid opinions. Be not offended by my letter but if you love understanding, rejoice in the Spirit who reveals to me according to the word of his promise.

"I know your spirit but you know not my spirit; how then can you judge? But I know your thoughts that they are vain and unfounded and it can not be otherwise, because you have not died to self. If this is not true, count me a liar but God would not have it, for I am His servant."

In the revision of the *Foundation,* written probably in 1554, Menno is even more outspoken, if possible, in his denunciations of the "corrupt sects." Here he says:

"Is it not a grievous delusion that ye suffer yourselves to be so wretchedly bewitched by such worthless men and so lamentably misled from one unclean sect into another; first Munsterite, then of Batenburg, now Davidian, and thus from Beelzebub to Lucifer and from Belial to Behemoth, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (II Tim. 3:7), suffering yourselves to be led about by every wind of false doctrine. You choose out a way for yourselves, as do all the priests and monks, and do not follow Christ.

"Did not Paul say: 'But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed' (Gal. 1:8)? And that your prophets with their king, kingdom, plurality of wives, sword, etc., do not agree with Paul's and the apostles' doctrine and Gospel, ye must confess and admit; whence it forcibly follows that they with their doctrine and cause are cursed and anathematized.

"Say, my beloved, what do you do with the clear word and testimony of the Almighty Father, which He himself has testified of His Son, and said: This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him. Notice well, Him shall ye hear, but ye violate His Spirit, word and example, ye follow and hear those who with their spirit, doctrine and conduct are from the bottomless pit, yea manifestly antichrists and false prophets.

"Say, ye deceived children, where is there a syllable in the doctrine of Christ and the apostles (according to whose spirit doctrine, conduct and example all Scripture must be understood) by which ye can prove and establish one of your erring articles?

"If you would appeal to the literal understanding and conduct of Moses and the prophets, then must ye also become Jews, accept circumcision, literally possess the land of Canaan, again set up the Jewish kingdom, build the city and the temple, offer sacrifices and institute worship according to the law and confess that Christ the promised Saviour has not yet come nor changed that which was literal and figurative into the new spiritual, abiding substance.

"Ye miserable erring ones, observe. I have said above that the kingdom of Christ is not of this visible, tangible, perishing world, but that it is an eternal, spiritual abiding kingdom.—Here shamefacedness, propriety and chastity are taught and followed, and not unchastity, infamy and uncleanness. I think you understand well what I mean. In short, here are taught the Spirit, word, will, command, prohibition, ordinance, usage and example of Christ, to which all Scripture points us; and not the opinion of the false prophets, high sounding words, enchanting appearances, boastings, dreams, visions, lying wonders, against which the Spirit of God and the Scriptures everywhere warn and counsel us.

"O ye apostate children, hear the word of God and accept it; for your way is in darkness and your path leads to death.—Munster and Amsterdam may well be unto you an eternal warning and example.

"How many innocent hearts have they deceived! How many poor souls have they seduced! What great shame have they brought upon the profession of God's word! What coarse abominations have some of them committed under a pious appearance! How great cause of innocent blood have they given the poor, blind magistrates who, alas, have no great understanding of the Holy Word.

"I think it is time you should see and learn to know your lying, faithless and seducive prophets; they are the foxes which spoil the vineyard of the Lord. They are the thieves and murderers of your souls, false prophets who forsake the Lord that bought them and have directed you poor erring sheep to their own lying visions, dreams and the opinions of their heart, and contrary to all Scripture have led you to a false and loose foundation.

"How like unto those you have become of whom Eusebius writes that they expounded the prophets according to the desires of their heart, denied Paul and the New Testament and carried about with them a book of which they boasted that it fell as a present for them from heaven.

"So it is in your instance, O ye mad ones (forgive me, for it is the truth that I write). The prophets you read according to Jewish understanding, the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, you say, is all fulfilled, and pretend that there is now another dispensation, etc., and you are not aware that you thereby forsake the Son of God, deny all Scripture, comfort yourselves with mere lies, just as did disobedient Israel in their time.

"But that they deceive you to the belief that the doctrine of the apostles was imperfect and that they now teach you that which is perfect, this is a deception above all deceptions," etc. (64 seq.; I:94 seq.).

Joris won many adherents in the Netherlands; over fifty were executed in 1538 and 1539 at Delft. Not a few of them confessed to adultery and polygamy. They had been taught that God would not permit them to be put to death; or if He permitted it, they would at once be raised again to life for a testimony that David was the man sent of God. Hence the deluded people were zealous to confess their faith. In consequence of such experiences David was led to modify his teachings in certain particulars. Until the great change came for which they waited it was now held unwise and unnecessary to confess the faith before the world; it was right to conform in outward appearance to the religious forms and practices of the ruling churches. Just as it is impossible, said one of the leaders among the Davidites, to serve the Lord with the body only, if the heart is not in it, so also it is impossible to blaspheme or deny the truth, if the heart is not in it. Hence for a Davidian

it was not sin to take part in idolatry and anti-scriptural religious forms.[8] In consequence of this policy the Davidians had no martyrs in later years. Not only were they willing to carry out all the religious forms prescribed by the state in which they sojourned, but it became the fashion among them to deny their religious views when suspicion was raised aginst them. And why not, if a denial that does not come from the heart, will not count?

It is probable, although not altogether certain, that David Joris in the first years after he received his supposed call to be a prophet, defended the baptism of adults. Later he declared that he was not sent to baptize, for "where the perfect power of faith and love has come, the ceremonies of the New Testament, called sacraments, may certainly be omitted without sin." The Davidians defended the practice of infant baptism against the Mennonites (as will be pointed out). They are generally classed with the Anabaptists, but, while in the first years of their existence they, as already said, may have practiced the baptism of adults, they were not Anabaptists in their later period. It has been held that the most vital characteristic of the Anabaptists was not the practice of believers' baptism, but the thought of establishing the kingdom of God on earth. But to the great Anabaptist sects, viz., the Swiss Brethren, Huterites and Mennonites, as well as to the Denckians the idea of a literal kingdom which was to be identical with the church was entirely foreign; they believed that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and that the state churches' insistance that all citizens must be identified with the church was quite unscriptural. It has also been said that the belief in special divine revelations, as found among the Davidians, marks them as Anabaptists. But the great Anabaptist denominations of the Reformation times were the most radical advocates of the principle that the Holy Scripture alone is the authority in matters of faith; they condemned the new prophecy of "the corrupt sects."

[8] "To dissimulate with the world" is Menno's expression for this attitude of the Davidians. He placed participation in the worship of the state church for the sake of avoiding persecution in the same category.

One of the principal representatives of Davidianism was Nicolaus Blesdijk, David's son-in-law. In 1546 this man had a debate with Menno Simons, Dirk Philips and other Mennonite leaders in a country place near Lübeck. In this discussion the principal point of dispute was that of infant baptism. Blesdijk asserted that the acceptance of infant baptism could not be condemned, for Christ does not forbid it and there is no proof that the apostles did not baptize infants; and even if infant baptism is a misuse, it does not follow that it must be abolished. Menno Simons, on the other hand, showed that a Christian must be guided by God's Word and that there is no Scriptural ground for infant baptism. It should be said that the Davidians were difficult to deal with in debate, since they put forth the plea that they were misunderstood, however that they observed infant baptism does not permit of dispute. The records of this debate are lost, but Blesdijk gives an account of it in two or three of his tracts.

In his *Foundation,* of 1539, Menno Simons enlarges upon his position on the Davidians' view of the permissibility of infant baptism. He says:

"I well know that there are many idle talkers who, although they realize that not infants but believers should be baptized, nevertheless talk in this manner: Now, what shall water avail us? We have once been baptized [in infancy] in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; had we only the new life, it would suffice us.—O how lightly is the word of the Lord set at naught, just as if the eternal Wisdom and Truth had bidden or done anything without purpose. No, my beloved, no! He has commanded it and He would also have it observed! For His council, says the prophet, shall stand and all His will be done. Do not ask the Lord, why He has commanded it, for it is His blessed will. Who are you that you should contradict God? Hear Him and be obedient to Him.

"This is the very least of all the commandments which He has given. It is a much greater commandment to love your enemies, to do good to those who do evil to you, to pray in spirit and in truth for those who persecute you, to subjugate the flesh under God's word, to tread under your feet all pride, covetousness, impurity, hate, envy and intemperance, to serve your neighbor with gold, silver, with house and possessions, with

your hard labor, with council and deed, with life and death, nay to be free from all evil desire, unbecoming words and evil works, to love God and His righteousness, will and commandments with all your heart, and to bear the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ with a joyous heart. Can the commandment of baptism be compared with any of these? I say again, it is the least of all the commandments that were given us, for it is not more than a little outward work, namely a handful of water. Now he who has obtained the most important matter, namely the inward, will nevermore say, "What can water avail me," but will readily with a thankful and obedient heart hear and fulfil the words of God. But as long as he has not the inward work, he may well say, what can water avail me!

"We do not enquire after or seek for water, but with great diligence we seek only the obedience to Jesus Christ who has given us the commandment. If we believe in Him, that His word is the truth (John 17:17), that His commandment is life eternal (John 12:50) that He is the true teacher who came from heaven (John 3:2), to bring to us all the truth, then we must certainly obey His voice or we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. For, I repeat, where there is no obedience, there is no faith.—If ye have any knowledge of Jesus Christ, any love for His holy word, do not further treat Him and His word with contempt, saying, if we had the life it should be sufficient. I tell you of a truth, there is no life that will help you, as long as you resist the Lord in the very least. He would have obedience and not sacrifice (I Sam. 15:22), He would have the heart and the whole man. What does He care for your works and life as long as He does not see your obedient, subjected will?"[9]

In the year 1546 Blesdijk also wrote *A Christian Vindication and due Refutation of the False, Unfounded Judgment, Slander and Abuse found in a letter written by Menno Symonse against a few Lovers and Followers of the true Righteousness of Christ, Because they are not so Superstitious as he is in Regard to Observing Certain Ceremonies. Very Useful and Serviceable ... to all who Love the Middle Way.*" Menno Simons had written a letter to the Melchiorites in Amsterdam in which

[9] *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers,* 1539, fol. F4b seq. In the revision Menno has given this section the title, "To the Despisers of Baptism."

he insisted on keeping the commandments of Christ instead of partaking in the religious forms of the Catholic state church. While it is clear that this letter is not addressed to Davidians, Blesdijk may have decided to reply to it for the good reason that it refuted the opinions which the Davidians shared with the Melchiorites. Blesdijk asserts in this book that participation in Roman Catholic worship (including, it may be observed, the adoration of the host and prayer to the saints) was not idolatry, since these things may be observed in appearance only; he ignored the fact that the Davidians took part in the worship of the state church from hypocritical motives, desiring to give out the impression that they actually worshiped the host. The believers, says Blesdijk, have the liberty to observe any religious ceremonies and to have their infants baptized; a true Christian need not observe any ceremonies. Menno errs, he says further, in the opinion that a Christian should not put on gold and costly array and that one should bear persecution for the sake of baptism or other religious forms. Besides this little work Blesdijk wrote two other important tracts to defend certain Davidians' teachings against the Mennonites.

David Joris wrote a surprisingly large number of tracts and books; his principal works is *'t Wonderboek*. (The complete title is: "The Book of Wonder in Which that Which was Hidden from the Beginning of the World is Revealed.—Highly to be Praised Must be the One who was Sent as an Ambassador in the Name of the Lord"). His style is obscure and confused. The attempts to exhonorate him and his followers from the accusation of immoral teachings and vile practices have signally failed. Nevertheless he was a religious character. Obviously some honest men were deceived by his pretense of piety, his winning personality and his smooth words.

The story of Joris' later life reads like a novel. On April 1, 1544, an exceedingly well dressed man of very dignified appearance, named John of Bruges came with a few companions to Basel in Switzerland. He represented himself as a Zwinglian fugitive, told a pitiful story of the persecution he had endured in the Netherlands and asked permission to settle with his

family in the city. He made the best impression on all who met him, and the Council was quite willing to grant his request. On August 25, 1544, he came with his numerous family and servants to the city. They took the oath of citizenship, thereby uniting formally with the Zwinglian state church. John of Bruges bought a house in the city and a farm in the neighborhood. He had an abundance of means and lived with his family in the style of a nobleman. His dress was that of a man of the world; his body was at times decked with jewels. Withal he gave alms, was diligent in church attendance and honored the ministers of the city. His children married into prominent families. He lived at Basel eleven years, an acceptable member of the state church. On August 25, 1556 he died and in acknowledgement of his uncommon piety was buried in St. Leonard's Church.

This man was none other than David Joris. He went to Basel because in the North where his writings were circulated and where he had many followers there was not the opportunity to practice deception and lead a double life to the same extent as in Switzerland. Every precaution was taken to hide his identity; the members of his family and household were enjoined to observe strict silence regarding their former history, but nevertheless it seems almost incredible that he succeeded so well in deceiving the city. He made no attempt whatever to spread his doctrine in that vicinity. While he wrote a great many tracts and books at Basel, they were written in the language of the lower countries. His dupes in those countries kept sending their money and treasures to the prophet. Only three years after his death his identity was made known to the authorities at Basel, in consequence of the apostacy of his own son-in-law Blesdijk. This zealous advocate of Davidianism came to his senses during the life time of Joris. His eyes were opened, so he confessed, through the terrible increase of vice among the Davidians. But only indirectly was his renunciation of his former belief the cause of the discovery that John of Bruges was David Joris.

On March 13, 1559 all the male relatives and friends of

John of Bruges were arraigned before the magistrates of Basel. They staunchly asserted that John of Bruges never went by another name nor taught anything but orthodox Zwinglianism. But when a search of the houses was made and a great number of Davidian books and letters were found, they saw that further denial would be useless, and made a confession in the affirmative. Every one of them (about 30) abjured the Davidian faith. David Joris was condemned to the fire as a heretic by the Zwinglian authorities of Basel. His body was exhumed and, together with his books, burned at the stake on May 13, 1559.

Menno Simons' attitude toward David Joris is clearly set forth in his reply[10] to Joris' letter which has been extensively quoted above. Menno writes:

"I am ready for a spiritual, not for a carnal combat. Hitherto I have stood without fear in the conflict with my adversaries, and have had the victory because I have fought not with my own, but with divine weapons, namely with the doctrine of the Gospel which shall never be overcome, may there be ever so many opponents to attack it. Through continued use I have become accustomed to this armor and this battle, as to the daily food; the doctrine of the Gospel I use for an armor, breastplate, apparel and cloak.

"But you, David, have laid aside and rejected this armor long ago, and in its place you set your new imaginations, philosophy, rhetorical tricks and other deceptions of the devil; rightly therefore are you considered an antichrist, a man of sin and son of perdition, a false prophet, murderer of souls, deceiver and falsifier of the divine doctrines and commandments of Christ. I am surprised and amazed over the presumptuousness and impudence of this your letter seeing that you, after you have for many years advocated and spread so many blasphemous doctrines in your former books, are yet without any compunction of conscience but continue to set forth the same folly. That you dare to place your own dreams, visions, imaginations and tricks above the wisdom of the holy Spirit, through whom the prophetical and apostolical doctrine was given, is an evidence of devilish pride and antichristian presumption.

And further you, a wretched man, a shadow and ashes,

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[10] Printed in *Nederlandsch Archief voor K. Geschiedenis,* vol. 5, 1845, pp. 73-77; *Zeitschr. f. hist. Theol.,* 1863, pp. 1431-46.

dare to put your own work above the work of Jesus Christ, and your own doctrine above the doctrine of the apostles. And you and your followers in shameful hypocrisy, observe the practices and ceremonies of Papists, Lutherans or Zwinglians. You follow the usages of any of these. And you advise, yea, practice the polygamy of the Jews. Your own life and that of your followers is not less corrupt and stained than your doctrine. By your attire and usages you indicate worldly pride and wantonness.

'You, presumptuously, usurp for yourself the honor which belongs to the Son of God alone; you declare Christ's doctrine as invalid and your own as perfect and abiding; you place your own antichristian calling and office over the office of Christ and the apostles; under the pretext of humility you aim at and promote diabolical obstinacy; under the cloak of perfection, chastity and other virtues, you seek vices and abominations, adultery and lasciviousness, and in the manner of the Lutherans and Papists you pervert the Christian life unto a quite worldly life—therefore I fear that God (who gives His honor to none other) will give you a reward and end, such as John of Leyden, the Munsterite king and others before him who have taken for themselves the honor which is due to the Son of God, have had.

"Now, do not write to me further; save your paper and ink. I shall henceforth not read any writing that may come from you, except it be evident that you reject and condemn your ungodly doctrine and give to the doctrine of Christ the honor that is due it."

XV

ADAM PASTOR

Roelof Martens, who is better known by the name of Adam Pastor, of Dorpen in Westphalia, was about 1530 priest at Aschendorf. The date when he cast his lot with the Obbenites is unknown. He served the Church as a minister and was ordained an elder or bishop by Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, probably in 1542. At an early date he wrote a tract against the Davidians. He took part in the debate between Mennonite leaders and Davidians at (or near) Lübeck in 1546. About the same time or somewhat later certain doctrinal deviations of Pastor became apparent. In 1547 the elders came together in Embden to confer concerning his unorthodox opinions. He deviated from the teachings of the Brethren principally on the incarnation and the deity of Christ. Hopes were entertained for his restoration to his former doctrinal position. When these hopes proved ungrounded, the elders in the same year held a convention in Goch which resulted in his excommunication.

The principal source of our information concerning Pastor's teachings is his *Contrast Between True and False Doctrine* to which is added an account of the debate held between Mennonite elders and Pastor at Lübeck in 1552.[1] This account was probably written later than the first named treatise; no date is given in either instance. Pastor asserts that he does not deny the divine nature in Christ,[2] but nevertheless he holds that He

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[1] *Underscheit tusschen rechte leer unde valsche leer.* Reprinted in *Bib. Ref. Neerl,* vol. 5, pp. 361-581. Original print in the Mennonite library in Amsterdam.

[2] *Bib. Ref. Neerl.,* vol. V, p. 382 seq., 519.

did not exist as the Son of God previous to His coming into the world, and was divine only in the sense that God dwelled in Him. It is difficult to see that Christ would in that case be divine in another sense than the Christian believer. On point of the Incarnation, or the origin of Jesus' body, Pastor defended the view of the state churches. This is worthy of notice in view of the unfounded supposition that the doctrine of the Incarnation, as held by Menno, has a Unitarian tendency and that Pastor's Unitarianism was developed from the said doctrine, as was opined by S. Cramer.[3]

That Pastor does not speak of the Scriptures as God's Word, as has been said,[4] can not be maintained.[5] The Bible was for him the only authority in matters of faith.[6] He says in the course of a debate, "Where is this written? I do not believe reason; give me Scripture to prove this."[7] He defends the doctrine of the atonement. Not through the "fruit of the vine," in communion, he says, but "through the blood which flowed from Christ's wounds" we have forgiveness of sin. Christ paid the debt of the first Adam. He only is the Redeemer, "the only Mediator between his Father and fallen man;" through His merit and blood alone are we saved.[8] In view of the assertion that Pastor held "liberal views touching the church," it should be noted that he is quite outspoken in denouncing the teachers of false doctrine, principally the priests of the national church, whose sermons he forbid his followers to hear.[9] The idea of the purity of the church and the perfection of the believers he carried to a point considered unsound by Menno Simons.[10] Concerning "avoidance" he taught that eating and drinking with the excommunicated is forbidden, but in the

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[3] *R. E.*, vol. 12, p. 592.
[4] *Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. 5, p. 338.
[5] Compare *Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. 5, pp. 371, 366, 516.
[6] The same, pp. 371, 373.
[7] The same, p. 549.
[8] The same, vol. 5, pp. 488, 382, 386 seq., 517, 417.
[9] The same, vol. 5, pp. 501, 403-410. Compare especially p. 407.
[10] The same, p. 419 seq.

Disputation he says, the excommunicated should be held as the world.[11] He believed that ministers should not be chosen by the church, but direct of God. The doctrine of non-resistance is not found in his extant writings. On the oath also he seems to have differed from Menno and his friends.[12] That he did not teach the resurrection of the body is a groundless assumption.[13]

Pastor's denial of the true divinity of Christ was considered a grave offense by the Mennonites. This is evident from the strong opposition of Menno Simons, the spokesman of the Brethren, against Pastor, and further from the fact that he succeeded to win to his views only a small company of those among whom he had formerly labored. Menno wrote his *Confession of the Triune God* in vindication of the diety of Christ. In no uncertain tones and with the full conviction that the scriptural truth was on his side and that a most fundamental doctrine of the Gospel was at stake, he warned the church of this new teaching. S. Cramer has asserted that Menno's defence is "neither convincing nor strong"[14] but J. G. de Hoop Scheffer finds that Menno in this book made "a strong confession, a pressing demand without any reservation, he showed zeal over a matter for which he was willing to die, if need be,"[15] a view with which the unbiased reader will doubtless concur. Menno says:

"Dearly beloved brethren, understand me rightly. Christ is the eternal wisdom, the eternal power of God. For just as we believe and confess that the Father was from eternity and will be to eternity, yea He is the First and the Last, so we may certainly also fully believe and confess, that His wisdom, His power, His light, His truth, His life, His word, Christ Jesus, has been eternally with Him, in Him and by Him, yea that He is the Alpha and Omega. Or else, we should be compelled to admit that this only begotten incomprehensible, truly divine Being, Christ Jesus (whom the church fathers have called a

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[11] The same, pp. 367, 522.
[12] Nicolai in *Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. 7, p. 464.
[13] *Bib. Ref. Neerl., vol.* vol. 5, p. 382.
[14] *R. E.*, vol. 12, p. 592.
[15] *D. B.*, 1894, p. 27.

person), through whom the eternal Father has made all things, has had a creature-like beginning, an opinion which certainly all true Christians confess and consider a terrible blasphemy, a curse and abomination. May the gracious beloved Father ever protect and uphold all His beloved childen in the right and true confession of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ." (387; II:184).

Menno Simons' teaching on the deity of Christ has been fully set forth elsewhere (pp. 200 and 228). The old accusation that he entertained unorthodox views on this point must be discarded as absolutely unfounded, although it has been repeated in recent publications.[16] K. Vos has averred that neither Menno nor other Anabaptists ever referred to the Holy Spirit as a person, and hence those who accused Menno and his friends of denying the Trinity had a basis for their charge.[17] This allegation also is without ground. Both Menno Simons and Dirk Philips speak of the Holy Spirit as a personal Being. Menno says: "The Holy Spirit we believe and confess to be a true, real or, as the church fathers speak of Him, a personal Holy Spirit," etc. (390a; II:186b). And Dirk Philips writes in his book *The Church of God:* "The Holy Ghost is the third name, person, power and operation of the Godhead, of one divine substance with the Father and the Son."[18]

The author of one of the older books on Mennonite history alleges that Adam Pastor was excommunicated by Dirk Philips.[19] If this be correct, it is nevertheless certain that Menno Simons fully approved of this measure. Not only does Menno testify that Pastor had received his dismissal "from us," but it is clear

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[16] This view has been set forth by Samuel Cramer in the articles *Menno Simons* and *Mennoniten, R. E.,* vol. 13, pp. 591, 607, also *Bib. Ref. Neerl.,* vol. 2, p. 36. Compare the said articles in *The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia.* A similar opinion is expressed in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* vol. 4, 1912, p. 270.

[17] Vos, *Menno Simons,* pp. 211 and 72. Similar opinions are found in Kühler, W. J. *Het Socinianisme in Nederland,* p. 42; Hoekstra, S., *Beginselen,* p. 256.

[18] *Bib. Ref. Neerl.,* vol. 10, p. 392; Philips, D., *Hand Book,* p. 382.

[19] *Successio Anab.* in *Bib. Ref. Neerl.,* vol. 7, p. 51.

that he was held responsible by Pastor for his exclusion.[20] Professor Scheffer was of the opinion that Menno in the preface to his *Confession of the Triune God* disapproved of Pastor's excommunication by Dirk Philips. An impartial examination shows that this preface does not contain an allusion to Pastor's exclusion or to Dirk Philips.[21] Menno, in the same passage in which he testifies that Pastor was excluded "from us" says further that he (Menno) is "of one mind with Dirk Philips." It is inconceivable that he should not have recognized an excommunication announced by his co-laborer Philips.

It is true that Menno at a later date had a discussion with Adam Pastor (at Lübeck). This, it should be observed, was not contrary to his position on the avoidance of the excommuni-

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[20] "Yuwe vnde yuwe medebanners" (you and those who with you pronounced the ban) Pastor says in his *Disputation, Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. 5, p. 522, and agan he speaks of "yuwe ban." That these words are addressed to Menno is clear, for in the same paragraph he speaks of "yuw Fundament boeck" (p. 521). Menno says in reference to Adam Pastor and his friends, "die van ons zijn afgedaen" (who have been excluded from us). 311a; II:95a. That the exclusion of Adam Pastor resulted in a friction between Dirk Philips and Menno, as has been repeatedly asserted (e. g., by Henry E. Dosker in *The Princeton Theological Review*, April, 1915, p. 301) is without foundation.

[21] Menno complains that Christian love has materially decreased in consequence of hurtful disputations concerning the divinity of Christ, the ban, etc., and then says, "de Heere en reken het haer voor geen sonde die't op de Banne gevoert hebben" (Folio Edition, p. 385). De Hoop Scheffer (D. B., 1894, p. 23) took these words to mean that Menno criticized those who had pronounced the ban on account of these matters. But it is not clear why Menno should here say "op de Banne gevoert" while in other instances he uses the form "op den ban," "over den Ban" (Folio Edition, pp. 385 and 476a). If the word in question means ban or excommunication, the meaning of the sentence would probably be: May the Lord not account it a sin to those who would make the well known doctrine and practice of the ban responsible for these difficulties. But to all appearance "Banne" in the sentence in question is a typographical error; an old manuscript of the book in Hamburg has "bane" (way) which doubtless is the correct reading. The supposition that Menno here reproves those who have pronounced the ban over Pastor is untenable.

cated, as has been supposed.[22] Menno repeatedly emphasized the duty of making efforts to win back the excommunicated.

Adam Pastor had according to the testimony of one of the old chroniclers at the time of his exclusion a small number of followers.[23] Gerardus Nicolai, the noted opponent of the Anabaptists who with evident satisfaction notes the fact that one who denied the divinity of Christ was found among them, asserts that Pastor "gained many adherents."[24] Nicolai wrote in 1569; he says that there existed at that time a sect of Adam Pastorites. His statement must be received with caution. We do not learn where the adherents of Pastor were found nor to what extent they were organized as a church or sect. Neither in Nicolai nor anywhere do we hear of co-workers with Pastor. To all appearance his followers were never strong numerically. In 1552 Gellius Faber in an attempted refutation of Menno Simons mentions Adam Pastor as the head of a faction, but while he asserts in the same place that Obbe Philips had "not a few" adherents, he makes no statement to that effect concerning Adam Pastor. If Gellius had any ground whatever to speak of numerous adherents of Adam Pastor, he would undoubtedly have done so. Even then his statement would require further proof to be acceptable. Menno Simons in his reply to Gellius denies that Obbe Philips' followers were numerous; not ten, he asserts, could be found who shared his opinion.

Certain is that the Adam Pastorites had a short history. There may have been those who held to Pastor's teachings after his death,[25] but no evidence to that effect has yet been found.

Adam Pastor died in Munster. The time of his decease is unknown. He was buried in the public *Ueberwasser* cemetery, if we may accept the testimony of Hamelmann. If he, at the

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[22] *Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. 5, p. 323; *D. B.*, 1909, p. 105.

[23] *"Een kleyn hoopken," Het Beginsel*, etc. *Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. 7, p. 520.

[24] *Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. 7, p. 464.

[25] It should be said that the Adamites or Naked-goers must not be confounded with the followers of Adam Pastor who also were sometimes spoken of as Adamites.

time of his death, held the views which he defended in his writings, his fellow citizens were evidently not aware of it.

It has been supposed that the martyr Herman Vlekwyk was an adherent of Pastor, and since Vlekwyk is known to have been baptized in 1565 at Bruges, the opinion has been advanced that a congregation of followers of Pastor existed in that city.[26] But Vlekwyk, in his confession before the inquisitor, defended the doctrine of the Incarnation as held by Menno against Adam Pastor. The inquisitor brought accusation against him to the effect that he followed on all points "the damned arch-heretic Menno Simons." Even if this charge should not prove altogether correct, it is clear that Vlewyk was not a follower of Adam Pastor. Professor S. Cramer has examined the original of the document containing the accusations against him and has not found a trace of a charge touching a denial of the Trinity.[27] A part of the protocol of the discussions between Vlekwyk and the Inquisitor is reprinted in the *Martyrs Mirror*.[28]

The supposition that Pastor's influence was noticeable among the Mennonites is without any evidence. S. Hoekstra, in his book on *Principles and Doctrine of the Early Anabaptists,* says rightly that he had "a small following" and his labors were "without noticeable influence on the Mennonites (*Doopsgezinden*)."[29] Not a trace of his opinions on the divinity of Christ is discernable among the early Mennonites. The Waterlandians who are sometimes said to have entertained somewhat more liberal views than Menno Simons, were quite orthodox on the fundamentals and especially on the deity of Christ. This is clear from their first confession as well as from the fact that the most notable defender of Christ's deity among the Mennonites against the Socinians was Hans de Ries (1553-1638) an elder of the Waterlandians. Jacques Outerman, an elder of the Flemish Mennonites in Haarlem, Holland, early in the seventeenth century was accused of unorthodox teaching on the

[26] *Nederl. Archief v. Kerkgeschied,* 1910, p. 329, and in other places.
[27] *Bib. Ref. Neerl.,* vol. 7, p. 195.
[28] *Van Braght,* pp. 741, 763.
[29] *Beginselen en Leer der Oude Doopsgezinden,* p. 190.

divinity of Christ. Only recently these charges have been repeated by W. J. van Douwen[30] and W. J. Kühler[31] in whose opinion Outerman believed that Christ during his life on earth was a man only. This view of the said writers is evidently due to a misunderstanding. Outerman not only taught the preexistence of Christ, but that He retained His divine nature in the Incarnation.[32] That he was biblically orthodox on the point in question is fully evident from the confession which he, with nineteen other elders drew up, setting forth their faith in the deity of Christ. This confession bears the date of October 8, 1626. It is found in the *Martyrs' Mirror*.[33] Pieter Grispeer, one of the original signers of the well known confession of Dort (drawn up by Adrian Cornelis of the same city, 1632) was a co-laborer with Outerman in the Flemish Mennonite Church at Haarlem.[34] Presumably Outerman had passed to his reward at the time when the confession of Dort was adopted.

The Swiss Brethren agreed with Menno Simons and his friends in their position on the divinity of Christ. The opinion advanced by a few writers that the Swiss, in the conference held at Strasburg in 1557 declared the question of the deity of Christ to be of secondary importance, is without any foundation whatever. Not the divinity of Christ but the well known peculiar doctrine on the incarnation of Christ as held by the Brethren of the lower countries, was discussed and declared non-essential by this conference. In 1592 representatives of the Swiss Brethren met again in Strasburg and confessed their steadfast faith in the deity of Christ.

The definition of their attitude on the point in question is set forth in *An Answer of the Swiss Brethren, also named Upper Germans, to the Polish, Concerning the Point of the*

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[30] Van Douwen, *Socinianen en Doopsgezinden*, p. 99.

[31] Kühler, *Het Socinianisme in Nederland*, p. 96.

[32] Compare Kühler, p. 95.

[33] *Van Braght*, p. 1048.

[34] Schijn-Maatschoen, *Geschiedenis d. Mennoniten*, 1745, vol. 3, p. 236.

Incarnation and the Deity of Jesus Christ."[35] The "Polish" are the Socinians of Poland (Unitarians). They are in this letter addressed as "dear men," and their opinion is declared to be altogether unscriptural and unacceptable. The concluding sentences of this important document follow: "Passed at the general gathering of the elders and ministers from many countries, in the year 1592 at Strasburg .... From Rauf-bits own handwriting translated from the High German into the Low German." Rauf-bits, it may be interesting to notice, is none other than Rauf Bisch, one of the spokesmen of the Brethren in the great debate held at Frankenthal in the Palatinate in 1571.[36]

The Huterites also considered the divinity of Christ one of the most fundamental articles of faith. It is worthy of notice that the socalled Articles of the Moravian Anabaptists (1526) in which this doctrine is questioned, are of altogether doubtful origin. Apparently they were drawn up by Hubmaier to serve as sentences to be discussed in a debate with Hans Hut in 1526. Hubmaier seems to have alleged that these articles represented Hut's views, but this was denied by Hut himself,[37] who complained bitterly that the denial of the divinity of Christ and of other scriptural doctrines had been unjustly laid to his charge in these articles. Originally there were 52 theses or articles, but in the versions that have been handed down to us, their number is far less.[38] Hubmaier also has erroneously been charged with defending the views in question. Certain it is that no Anabap-

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[35] Printed in *Handelinge Der Vereenigde Vlaemse en Duytse Doopsgesinde Gemeynten, Gehouden tot Haerlem, Anno* 1649, *in Junio,* Vlissinghe, 1666.

[36] This letter to the Socinians has apparently escaped the notice of the author of *"Socinianen en Doopsgezinden,"* W. J. van Douwen (Leiden, 1898).

[37] K. Vos' statement (p. 100) that Hut denied the divine nature in Christ is without foundation.

[38] The articles are found in an English translation in McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith,* Philadelphia.

tist body would have subscribed to these articles. As a source for Anabaptistic principles and doctrine they are of very small value.[39]

Once more it was found necessary to excommunicate an elder for unorthodox teaching. Francis Reines Kuyper, one of Menno's fellow laborers, had advocated some deviating opinions at the time of the conference at Embden. He seems to have denied the doctrine of justification by faith. In 1549 he was excommunicated by Menno Simons, and in 1554 he reunited with the Roman Catholic Church.

[39] The most noteworthy and thorough treatise on the socalled *Nicolsburg Articles* is found in Sachsse, *D. Balthasar Hubmaier als Theologe*, pp. 109-115.

XVI

RECENT ACCUSATIONS AGAINST MENNO SIMONS

Various charges against Menno Simons, some of them of a most serious nature, have been advanced by his most recent biographer, K. Vos.[1]

Menno, according to this author stated an untruth in the account of his conversion: He says, when he had lived about one year as a priest in Witmarsum, namely in 1532, the unscripturalness of infant baptism was first asserted in those parts of Friesland and he knew not who the men were who first advanced this teaching or whence they came, neither had he ever seen them. This is false, says Vos; Menno must have heard of Peter Woodsawer through the Philips brothers, even if he did not meet him personally. However Menno Simons does not here speak of the time when Peter Woodsawer went forth to teach and baptize. It was more than a year after the teaching of the unscripturalness of infant baptism was first advanced in or near Witmarsum that Peter Woodsawer appeared on the scene. We do not know who were the men (Melchiorites) that first spread this doctrine in those places, but on the other hand we do know that in many instances men who advanced new and forbidden doctrine purposely veiled their identity. There is no indication that Menno ever saw these men. To say that he here speaks an untruth is to make an assertion which is utterly incapable of proof.

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[1] It is a matter of sincere regret that this author who is the pastor of a doctrinally neutral Mennonite church, not only repeats some of the old slanders of Menno Simons' opponents, but adds serious new accusations which are altogether groundless.

In the preface to the second edition of the *Foundation,* Vos alleges further, Menno asserted that "the contents of the new book were the same as of the old, only a few typographical errors were corrected and a few passages made clearer in style, language or form, but nothing was changed from the first principles and contents."[2] Here again, says Vos, Menno did not tell the truth. But a careful reading of Menno's statement leads to the result that he says expressly, he made many changes. "I have in some instances made additions, have cleared up what was obscure, corrected the mistakes, eliminated what was unnecessary," etc., in other words, he had rewritten the book. And in order that no one might mistake the revision of the book for the first edition he also changed the title and in the preface makes mention of the title under which the first edition was published. It is correct that Menno says, he made "no changes from the first principles and contents," but this statement is made in the same paragraph in which he alludes to the additions and eliminations in the revision.[3]

Vos says that in Menno's account of the debate with Martin Micron an untruth is found (560a; II:365) but fails to say wherein the alleged untruth consists. Further this author on the authority of Martin Micron accuses Menno of saying an untruth twice in the course of this debate. Two times, so Micron contends, Menno denied a statement which he had previously made and hence he is guilty of untruthfulness. But the audience before which Menno made a denial of the alleged statements was practically the same before which he had made the first statements. It must be remembered that there were no impartial judges to preside at this debate and there was danger that one participant would quote the other in a way that he was con-

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[2] Vos. *Menno Simons,* p. 39.

[3] A comparison of the preface of the earliest known edition of the revision (in the socalled Eastern language in which Menno rewrote this book) with later Dutch edition reveals no material difference. The first translation from the Eastern into the Dutch language was printed in 1558. It has often been reprinted and has served as the basis for the English translation.

vinced to have been misquoted and consequently he would deny the statement. This accusation against Menno is based wholly on the assertion of one of his bitterest opponents, who held that a Christian government was under duty to persecute Menno and his friends. That such accusations can not be uncritically accepte! need not be said. Martin Bucer, the leading reformer of Strasburg, asserted that Hans Denck would not condemn the horrible fratricide committed by Thomas Schugger in St. Gall — a charge which is a blot not on Hans Denck's but on Martin Bucer's name.[4]

It is unnecessary to say that Menno Simons denied this charge. He complains bitterly that Micron "has dishonestly adulterated, changed, mutilated and glaringly misinterpreted my words and testimony" (617a; II:423a). "I hope that I should rather suffer to be put to death," he says, "before a wilful untruth, be it small or great, should pass over my lips" (608b; II:413b). "That they have thus shamefully trampled upon me, is but little to me, for I am aware that honor is not due me, being born of Adam, etc. But that I should be a fickle liar, a falsifier and artful rogue as through the slanderous, untrue, rude and bitter spirit of envy I am depicted by our opponents, from this may the merciful Lord ever preserve me" (597a; II:399b).

Vos refers to Samuel Cramer to substantiate his accusation concerning Menno's untruthfulness in his debate with Micron. We must remind him of the fact that Cramer held Menno to have been virtually a Unitarian, besides other unfounded opinions concerning Menno Simons. This question can not be settled by appeal to authority, it must stand on its own merits.

In his first books, this author says further, "Menno manifested himself as one who is clothed with authority, one who .... shall fulfill a principal part in the looked-for coming of the Lord. As one sent of God he provides his books with wishes of blessing which in the name of God and Christ shall fall to the believers' part through Menno."[5] In vain do we look for

[4] Thomas Schugger was reputed to be an Anabaptist, but this was denied by the Anabaptists.

[5] Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 58.

evidence to substantiate these charges; our author brings a number of quotations which show that Menno believed the advent of Christ to be near, but contain no indication whatever of a thought that he should have any part to fulfill in its consummation. On the contrary, his writings contain numerous passages showing clearly that he believed it probable that he would not be among the living in the day of the Lord. He says in the first edition of the *Foundation:*

"And if I must give my blood for it, I shall not fare worse than did John at the hands of Herod. — I do not consider my life better than did the dear fathers. Neither may they take anything except my mortal perishing body and flesh which, if I lived a thousand years, must once die."[6]

This passage and many others of similar thought show the fallacy of the opinion in question. What this author says concerning Menno's wishes of blessing indicates that he has failed to gain the proper point of contact with Menno Simons.

"Although Menno," so we read again, "has not appropriated for himself some Old Testament name, as did so many of the Anabaptist leaders [Hofmann, Matthys and John of Leiden], he nevertheless has as high an opinion of his own importance as they had."[7] Here again an assertion is advanced which is clearly erroneous. There is abundant evidence to show that Menno Simons did not ascribe to himself any authority except such as the Scriptures give a minister of the Gospel. Many quotations to that effect can be given from his writings. He says in the first edition of his *Foundation:*

"Therefore read these our writings which we have given out and prove them in all wisdom, not by general councils, not by long usages, not by imperial laws, not by papal decrees; let not your decisions be influenced by placards and threatened cruelty, but judge these things alone by the Gospel and the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and His holy apostles by which indeed the

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[6] *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers,* 1539, fol. O2a. Compare also fol. L7a.

[7] Vos, *Menno Simons,* p. 59.

doctrine and life of a Christian must be judged and measured; and if you do this, you will without doubt find our doctrine and life to conform to the same. And if in these our writings we should have humanly erred in anything, in such instance we shall be willingly corrected from the word of the Lord."[8]

To support his supposition that Menno believed himself clothed with special divine authority this author quotes a passage from Menno which in part is based on I Cor. 6:3, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" The passage is taken from Menno's *Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm,* where it is found in connection with the verse: "Consider mine enemies for they are many and they hate me with cruel hatred." The passage is here given at length, and the part quoted by Vos printed in Italics.

"When I was of the world, I spake and did as the world and the world hated me not. — While I served the world, the world rewarded me. All men spake well of me even as their fathers did of the false prophets. But now that I love the world with a godly love, seek from my heart its salvation and blessing, admonish, instruct, and rebuke it with Thy holy word and point it to the crucified Christ Jesus, the world has become to me a grievous cross and a gall of bitterness. So great is its hatred that not only I myself but also all who show me love, mercy and favor must in some places look for imprisonment and death.[9] O blessed Lord, I am considered by them more unfavorable than a notorious thief and murderer.

Am I not as a lost sheep in the wilderness of this world, chased, pursued and sought unto death by ravenous wolves? — My flesh had almost said, I am deceived, because I find the unrighteous and unconcerned living in great quietness and peace, in riches and prosperity, while the godly must endure so much hunger, thirst, persecution and affliction. Their habitation is insecure; with difficulty they earn their bread; they are accursed, defamed, persecuted and despised of all men; they are hated of all men as the filth of the world and as an abomination.

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[8] *Dat Fundament des Christelyken leers,* 1539, fol. O2[a]. Compare also fol. L7[a]. A striking refutation of the view in question is the prayer quoted on p. 75.

[9] The words "in some places" are not contained in the first edition of the book.

O blessed Lord, mine enemies are many and great. — I am considered their mortal enemy because I point out to them the way of righteousness. O Lord, I am not ashamed of my doctrine before Thee and Thy angels, much less before this rebellious world, for I know of a surety that I teach Thy word. I have not taught anything but true repentance, dying unto our sinful flesh and the new life which is of God. I have taught the true faith in Thee and in Thy blessed Son, that it is to be working and powerful through love. I have taught Christ Jesus and Him crucified, very God and very man, etc., etc.

"If all the prophets, apostles and evangelists have not taught this with great clearness from the beginning, I shall willingly say that my shame and oppression is just. — Had I not the word of Christ, how gladly would I be taught it, for I seek it with fear and trembling; *in this* [namely in following the Word] *I can not be deceived. I have by Thy grace through Thy holy Spirit believed and accepted Thy holy truth as the sure word of Thy good pleasure. It shall not deceive me in eternity. Let them write and call, twist and threaten, let them dispute and boast, destroy, persecute and kill, if they choose, still Thy word shall triumph and the Lamb shall gain the victory. Yea, I am assured and certain that with this my doctrine which is Thy word, in the day of the revelation of Christ, I shall judge not only the world but also the angels.* And though I and my beloved brethren were totally extirpated and one and all taken from the earth, nevertheless Thy word shall remain the eternal truth" (174b; I:225b).

It should be observed that the quotation given by Vos begins in the middle of a sentence, leaving out the antecedent of the pronoun "this" in the first clause and obscuring the fact that Menno speaks here of the word of Christ. Had the last sentence been added in which Menno refers to the possible success of his enemies who sought to take his life, it would have been made clear that he did not pretend to know that he would live to see the advent of Christ, excluding the insinuation that he believed himself to be called to fulfil a principal part in that event. Vos refers to a quotation of the passage in question by Cardinal Hosius, as given by Brandt in his *History of the Reformation*. It must be said that Hosius' quotation is more impartial and more to the point than the one given by this author.

On the authority of the cited passage from the first epistle

to the Corinthians Menno Simons gives repeatedly expression to the thought that the true Christians will judge the world (e. g. Folio Edition P. 605a, marginal note): the doctrine which they advocate will be the judge in so far as this doctrine is the word of Christ (John 12:48). In all probability he would have readily admitted that he could not explain whether the saints will have a personal part in the judgment of the world. It should be noticed that he speaks in the context of the terrible persecution and infamy to which he and his friends were subjected for the sake of God's word, and his point is that those who here suffer with Christ shall with Him reign and be glorified. This, to his mind, was the import of the cited verse from first Corinthians. The charge of K. Vos[10] that Menno "announced himself as the judge in the judgment to come" is altogether baseless.

The second and last passage quoted by Vos to support his proposition that Menno had a high opinion of his own importance, as much so as the leaders of the Munsterites, follows.

> I rejoice from my heart that such faithful men are found who are ready to seal the holy commandments and testimonies of the Lord by giving their possessions and their blood, although you [Micron] upbraid me with this matter. Nor do I doubt that at the day of Christ they shall be a part of my crown." (605a; II:409b).

Vos does not seem to be aware that here again Menno expresses himself in the language of Scripture. The apostle Paul repeatedly speaks of those who had been led to Christ by him as his crown. (Phil 4:11; I Thes. 2:19). It seems almost unbelievable that on the ground of these passages Menno is put in the same category as Jan Matthys and John of Leyden as concerns his own estimate of himself.

Menno Simons advocated the view that ministers of the Word should not be engaged for a stated income either from the state or from the congregation, nevertheless a few writers have supposed that he received a fixed salary. "Nature was in his instance stronger than doctrine," says K. Vos. This asser-

[10] Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 218.

tion is based on a statement found in one of Menno's letters. The letter was printed apparently for the first time in the folio edition of his works, 1681, or about one hundred twenty years after it was written. An older manuscript copy is not known. Clearly the text of this letter bears unmistakable signs of faultiness and corruption.[11] The passage on which the said assertion is based follows.

"It was not with the thought of burdening you that I have written in my last letter to my intimate brother concerning the sixty Thalers annually. I took the liberty of so writing, for I need it yearly. — If something be sent for my need, send it the first opportunity; for the slaughtering time is at hand and I have little wherewith to buy. O, brethren, pardon my writing; necessity compels me" (392a; II:232b).

It is by no means certain that Menno wrote this appeal. However, assuming this to be the case, the above quotation would indicate that at least some of the brethren were informed that Menno needed sixty Thalers annually. Equally evident it is that there would have been no necessity for him to write as he did, had he received a salary of that amount a year. It need not be repeated here that Menno and the early Mennonite Church openly disapproved of fixed salaries for ministers. A few years after Menno's death Leonard Bouwens was disposed from the ministerial office on several charges, one of which was to the effect that he had accepted fifty Thalers for his service.[12]

A false accusation against Menno and his friends is also the insinuation of Vos[13] that they forbid to greet any one who was not of their own persuasion. Certainly this would be a characteristic of rank enthusiasm. There is absolutely no evidence for this assertion and there is abundant proof that it is unfounded. Menno writes on the passage II John 10, 11 (" .... neither greet him, for he that greeteth him is partaker of his evil deeds," German and Dutch translation).

"If some would say, John has forbidden the common usage

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[11] Compare Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 139.

[12] *Verclaringhe*, etc., by J. O. (Jacques Outerman), 1609, parag. 304.

[13] Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 116.

of greeting my answer is that before my God I can not understand that John said this in regard to the common custom of greeting, but he says: If some deceiver should come to us who has forsaken the doctrine of Christ, we should not receive such an one into our houses, lest he deceive us, and we should not greet him as a brother that we may not be partakers of his evil deeds. But not so with the worldly greeting. For if the worldly greeting had such inherent power that it caused me to be partaking of the transgression of those whom I greet, it must follow that I must be partaker of adultery, uncleanness, drunkenness, avarice, idolatry and blood-shed of the world as often as I greet a worldly man according to the common custom, or if I answer to his greeting. O no! not this greeting, but the greeting or the kiss of peace indicates unity (475a; II:278a).

K. Vos says:[14] "Whenever Menno became involved in a dispute, he overwhelmed his opponent with abusive words, but as soon as the latter refused to yield, but held him down to the point, and as soon as Menno was forced to argumentation, our man stood embarrassed. So he showed himself against John a'Lasco, Martin Micron, Adam Pastor and Leonard Bouwens." Here again this author makes statements which can not be substantiated. To assert that Menno in these instances poured abuse over his opponents, but stood embarrassed when they insisted on arguments is more than his own contemporary accusers have ventured to say. Menno in his *Brief and Clear Confession,* of 1544, testifies that in the discussions held at Embden he "in love" conferred with John a'Lasco and his colaborers and they permitted him to depart in peace. He addressed them in the said book in a strikingly amicable tone. What Vos says concerning Menno's harsh dealings with Adam Pastor and Leonard Bouwens is an assumption which is without any evidence whatsoever. The assertion that he used abusive speech against his opponents at Wismar, and stood embarrassed when they desired arguments is based on the clearly biased report of his opponent Micron.

It is true that in his writings Menno is sometimes oversevere in his arraignment of conditions in the state churches.

[14] The same, p. 29.

On the other hand, a comparison with the leading state church reformers shows that on point of abusive speech far severer criticism is due to them than to Menno. John Calvin who was more moderate on the point in question than either Luther or Zwingli speaks of Menno Simons personally in almost unbelievably abusive terms.[15] Never did Menno stoop down so low as to use such epithets, even not against the corrupt sects whom he denounced most severely.

Menno Simons' writings give unmistakable proof that he was an able defender of the principles and doctrines for which he and his friends stood. His defence of believers' baptism and of the voluntary principle excels the argumentation of his assailants on these points; it is second only to that of Hubmaier. None other but Martin Micron, his principal antagonist, himself, in a letter to one of the reformers speaks of the great power exerted by Menno through his writings.[16]

The strange assertion that Menno confessed himself to be a cowardly character is based on an evident misunderstanding of a passage found on page 258a of the folio edition (page 5, part 1 of the English edition) of his works. He does not say, as has been supposed, that he urged his own faint-heartedness as a reason against his ordination, but that he, in considering the call which he received, recognized "my small gift ..... the timidity of my flesh." A cowardly person would not have consented to become a leader of those who were put to death as fast as they could be apprehended.

[15] *Nihil hoc asino posse fingi superbius, nihil petulantius hoc cane. Corp. Ref. Calv.*, vol. 10, part 1, page 176.

[16] *Corp. Ref.*, vol. 45, p. 68. Quoted, Moeller-Kawerau, *Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 3, p. 117.

XVII

A LETTER OF MENNO SIMONS TO A TIMID BELIEVER

The following letter is addressed to Menno's wife's sister, Margaret Edes.

Most beloved sister, whom I sincerely love in Christ. From your dear husband's letter I understand that during all the winter you have been visited with sickness and affliction, which I very much regret to hear. But it is our daily prayer: "Holy Father, Thy will be done," by which we commit our will to the will of the Father, to deal with us as is pleasing in His blessed sight. Bear your affliction therefore with a willing heart, for this is His paternal good will concerning you and all to your own good, that you may from your heart turn from all perishable things and keep your eyes fixed upon the eternal, living God alone. Be of good cheer in Christ Jesus for after the winter comes the summer and after death life. O sister, rejoice that you are a true daughter of your beloved Father. Soon the inheritance of His glorious promise shall be due. Only a little while yet, says the word of the Lord, and He who is coming shall come and His great reward shall be with Him. May the almighty, merciful God and Lord, before whom you have bent your knees to his Honor, and whom in your weakness you have sought, grant you a resigned and patient heart, not unbearable pain, sweet refreshment, a gracious restoration or a godly dissolution, through Jesus Christ, for whom we all daily wait with you, beloved sister in Christ Jesus.

Secondly I understand that you are often troubled in conscience because you do not walk in such perfection as the Scrip-

tures direct us, nor have done so in the past; on which account I write the following to my faithful sister as a brotherly consolation from the sure word and eternal truth of the Lord. — As no one under the heavens has perfectly fulfilled the righteousness required of God, save Jesus Christ alone, therefore none, however god-fearing, righteous, holy and unblameable he may be, can come to God, obtain grace and be saved, than only (I say only) through the perfect righteousness, reconciliation and advocacy of Jesus Christ.

Be of good cheer, therefore, and be consoled in the Lord. You indeed can not expect greater or more perfect righteousness in yourself, than all the chosen of God from the beginning have had. In and by yourself you are a poor sinner and by the eternal righteousness banished from God, accursed and adjudged to eternal death; but in and through Christ you are justified, acceptable unto God, in eternal grace, and made His daughter and child. In this all the saints have found consolation, they have trusted in Christ and ever esteemed as unclean, weak and imperfect their own righteousness. Alone in the name of Christ they have with a contrite heart approached the throne of grace and with firm confidence have prayed the Father: O Father, forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

It is a very precious word which Paul speaks: "When we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly," yea when we were yet ungodly; and thereby "God commendeth his love toward us." "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. 5:6-10.

Lo, my beloved child and sister in the Lord, this I write from the sure ground of eternal truth. I herewith pray you and desire that you commit yourself wholly and fully to Jesus Christ and His merits, believing and confessing that His precious blood alone is your cleansing, His righteousness your piety, His death your life and His resurrection your justification. For He is the forgiveness of all your sins, His bloody wounds are your justification, His invincible strength the staff and consolation of

your weakness, as we have in former days, according to our small gift often shown and admonished you from the Scriptures.

Yea, most beloved child and sister, so long as you find and feel in yourself such a spirit which has an earnest desire for the good and abhors that which is evil, though the remnant of sin is not entirely dead in you, as also all the saints have complained of from the beginning, as already said, so long you may be assured that you are a child of God and that you will inherit the kingdom of grace in eternal joy with all saints, as John says: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." I John 4:13. I sincerely ask you that you may rightly accept this ground by faith to the refreshment, strengthening and consolation of your distressed conscience and soul, and hold fast to it to the end.

I commend you, most beloved child and sister, to the faithful, merciful and gracious God, in Christ Jesus, now and forever; may He do with you and with all of us according to His blessed will; either in the flesh, yet to remain a little while with your beloved husband and children, or out of the flesh, to the honor of His name and in the eternal bliss of your soul. You before and we after, or we before and you afterward. Separation must come once. In the city of God, in the new Jerusalem we will wait for each other, there sing the Hallelujah before the throne of God and the Lamb and praise His name in perfect joy.

Your dear husband and children I commend to Him who has given them to you, and He shall do all well for them. The saving power of the most holy blood of Christ be with my most beloved child and sister, now and forever. Amen.

Menno Simons, who sincerely loves you in Christ (434; II:40).

XVIII

MENNO IN WÜSTENFELDE. HIS DEATH. HIS PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION

Soon after Menno had left Wismar he seems to have settled in Wüstenfelde ("the desert field") near Oldesloe in the county of Fresenburg between Hamburg and Lübeck in Holstein. It is not definitely known just when he with his family first came to this place. Here the Brethren were protected by the nobleman Bartholomew von Ahlefeld. This man had been an officer in the Netherlandish army and witnessed their persecution and martyrdom in the Netherlands. They impressed him favorably as quiet useful people and he decided to permit them to settle on his estate called "the desert field." Notwithstanding the dangers to which he exposed himself by tolerating them, he remained their friend but, if taken to account by the higher authorities, he would probably not have admitted that he knew these people to be Anabaptists.

Says an old chronicler: "This nobleman privately gave them liberty to live on his estate and cared for them faithfully. At a time when he received orders from the king not to tolerate them, he sent a servant to them, in agreement with the order of the king, announcing to them that within a day they must depart or bide the consequences; but afterwards he sent a trusted servant to inform them of the cause for this order and advised them that the men should absent themselves for a week or two, or abide in their houses. In the meanwhile he succeeded in quieting this excitement through one of the courtiers. After this the exiles came from every side until there was a little congregation there that lived in comparative quiet."[1]

[1] Preface to the Folio Edition of Menno's Works, also English Works, part I, p. 8.

Menno Simons seems to have obtained his livelihood at times through his own manual labors. Later he was to a greater extent directly occupied with the obligations of his calling. At Wismar he incurred a severe injury on one of his lower limbs of which he was never fully restored, hence he, in view of the prevailing persecution, in order not to expose himself to unnecessary danger, he signed some of his letters "The cripple, your brother." At Wüstenfelde the congregation consisted for the most part of exiles.

From 1546 to 1552 Menno Simons seems to have found it impossible to have any of his writings printed. In 1552 (or toward the close of the preceding year) he succeeded in establishing a small printing outfit and consequently a considerable number of his books was published in this and the following years. Where he set up his press is not known, later it was located at Wüstenfelde. His printer was at one time waylaid and arrested by a neighboring nobleman, but his patron von Ahlefeld compelled the latter to release him. From here Menno traveled extensively; he is known to have visited in Friesland and other states in this period. Some of the older writers have opined that on one of his journeys the persecuting authorities succeeded to apprehend and arrest him, but evidently this is an error. One of the Frisian Mennonite writers, Peter Janz Twisck, gives us an account of the dangers which Menno encountered. He says:

"Menno Simons' daughter in our presence related the following incident: A man who attended the meetings of the Brethren agreed that he would betray him to the authorities for a certain sum of money. He pledged himself that he would deliver Menno into their hands or would forfeit his life. However, this he could not accomplish, for whenever he watched for him in the places where the meetings were to be held, Menno escaped through the providence of God. And at one time when this traitor, accompanied by an officer, undertook to find and apprehend him, Menno unexpectedly passed before them in a small boat on the canal, but the traitor kept silent until Menno had passed them some distance and had leaped ashore on the other side. Then the traitor said: 'Behold, the bird has escaped.' The officer was enraged and demanded why he did not speak

in time, to which the traitor replied: 'I could not speak, for my tongue was bound.' The magistrates were angry and the betrayer had to give his head because he let Menno escape."

"From a reliable source I have heard that Menno at Eenighenburg, a village in North Holland, at one time went into a church after the priest had completed the services for that day, and with great boldness, readiness of speech and learning he conversed with him in Latin about various Papistic superstitions. The priest was greatly surprised and after he had resigned his office, he related at length his conversation with Menno. Not infrequently Menno conversed with priests. A certain cloister he entered without disclosing his identity and spoke to the prior with great boldness, admonishing him earnestly and pointing out their great errors. Although a decree containing his name, description of his clothing, person, etc., was nailed to the church doors, with the promise of hundred or a few hundred guilders to any one who would cause his arrest, yet God preserved him from all the designs and cunning devices of the persecutors."

The well-known story of Menno escaping arrest through a sort of half lie has proved to be a fable. It is as follows: Menno was fleeing for his life and was overtaken by catch polls who halted the carriage in which he with others was traveling. Upon their question, "Is Menno Simons in the carriage,?" he is said to have turned to his fellow travelers with the remark, "It is asked whether Menno Simons is in the coach," and receiving a negative reply, he said to his pursuers, "The friends say, no." This story is of late origin and is unhistorical. Not Menno but a minister named Hans Buscher effected his escape in this manner. Later the story was ascribed to Menno Simons.[2]

The year 1557 brought bitter disappointment to Menno and his friends. Gillis of Aachen, having fallen into the hands of the Catholic authorities in the Netherlands, recanted his faith. In consequence he was beheaded and his body broken upon the wheel, at Antwerp, on May 10, 1557. Had he remained steadfast he would have been burned alive. Some of the older writers say he was visited by a minister of the Brethren after his recantation and upon confession was reinstated into the

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[2] *D. B.*, 1868, p. 25; Vos, *Menno Simons*, p. 261.

church. His last words, it is said, were, "It is too much to lose both body and soul." His death was not recorded by Van Braght in the *Martyrs' Mirror.*

The last years of Menno's life were saddened by the dissentions on the question of the ban, which led to a division. His wife and son — John — died before him while two daughters are known to have survived him. He died at Wüstenfelde in 1561, the date being probably January 31.

"His last exhortation," says a trustworthy writer "he gave on his death bed, while his end seemed near, an evidence of his unquenchable zeal. He, however, recovered and was better for several days; but on the day of the anniversary of his renunciation of the Roman Catholic Church he had a relapse, and on the day following, being Friday January 13 [31], 1561, in the sixty-sixth year of his life, he fell asleep in Jesus, and was buried in his own garden."

The exact place where his body was laid to rest is today unknown, the settlement or village of Wüstenfelde having been so completely destroyed in the Thirty Years War that no trace of it remained.[3]

Thus the way-worn pilgrim was permitted to die in peace and enter into the joy of his Lord. His was a life of toil under the most adverse conditions, a life of persecution and suffering. He was in dead earnest to serve his God. The opposition and scorn of the world made no impression on him. It has been rightly said that he lived a martyr's life. That the truth of God, the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ be accepted and carried out in life and practice, and that men be brought to a knowledge of evangelical truth was the concern of his life. A mere profession of Christianity and observation of outward forms without the regeneration of the heart and the pertinent fruits he heartily despised. State-made Christianity he considered a miserable counterfeit.

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[3] At Wüstenfelde as well as at Witmarsum a Menno monument has been set. Menno medals also have been made. Of the various supposed pictures of Menno none is acceptable as genuine. In all probability he never had his likeness taken.

Menno Simons was not the founder of a church. He was not a reformer in the sense that, in his opinion, the church with which he identified himself was in need of a reformation. He was the most noteworthy religious leader of the Netherlands in the Reformation period. In a strict sense he represented only the Brethren in the Netherlands and North Germany, but the Swiss Brethren of the South as well as the Huterites of Moravia differed from him on only a few points. His writings have been persistently ignored by church historians. They are an indispensible source of information concerning the principles, aims and life of one of the strongest religious parties of Reformation times. During his lifetime the Mennonites were practically the only non-Catholic church in the Netherlands.[4] Says Professor De Hoop Scheffer: "The Reformation among the masses of the Dutch people was first of all wrought by the people called Anabaptists." Only after Menno's death was the Calvinistic reformation introduced in Holland and later the church founded by John Calvin was made the state church.

While in the affairs of the world Menno Simons was by no means as prominent as the reformers who represented the state-church Reformation, he was as an advocate of pure evangelical principles, more than the equal of these men. The principle that the Holy Scriptures are the only valid foundation for the doctrine and practice of the church he upheld more consequentially and unswervingly than the leading reformers. He differed from them on the question of free will and predestination. The doctrines of baptismal regeneration and the remission of sins through the observance of the Lord's supper he opposed on the ground that they are antagonistic to the principle of justification by faith. At variance with all the leading reformers he understood the great missionary commission of the Lord to be valid for all time. He insisted on strict church discipline.

In contrast to Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, Menno Simons advocated the voluntary principle. He rejected the thought of

[4] There were circles of Davidians in the Netherlands. They did not formally renounce the ruling church, and could not be properly designated as a church.

a national church or state-church to which they adhered. Holland was the first country to accept the principle of liberty of conscience. Here the Mennonite element was stronger than in any other country, and Mennonite teaching on religious liberty had a wonderful victory. The very presence of the numerous Mennonites proved the correctness of their opinion that various creeds may exist side by side in a given land without endangering existing political conditions, that for prosperity the church is not dependent on the subsidy of the state, and that it is not the business of the state to decide questions of creed, much less to kill or persecute those who do not accept certain religious teachings. Against the protests of the Calvinistic state church theologians of Holland the government tolerated Mennonites and other dissenters.[5] It will be remembered that in Holland the Pilgrim Fathers found an asylum before coming to America in 1620.

After Menno's death Dirk (or Theodor) Philips was the most influential minister among the Brethren in North Germany and the Netherlands. His *Hand Book of the Christian Doctrine* is, besides Menno Simons' writings, the most important doctrinal work of the Brethren in the North. This book was translated into French, German and English. Three German editions were printed in America. The first English edition appeared in 1910. The complete works of Dirk Philips were recently published in volume 10 of the *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*. Dirk Philips died in 1568.[6]

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[5] Knipscheer, *De Nederlandsche gereformeerde synoden tegenover de Doopsgezinden*, 1563-1620, in D. B., 1910, 1911.

[6] K. Vos (*Menno Simons*, p. 131) speaks of Direk Philips contemptuously as "this run away Franciscan monk." This designation is characteristic of the tendency of this book. The charge that Philips was "afraid of his skin" (Vos, p. 329) when in 1567 he decided to call the leaders of the contending parties to Embden instead of going to the Netherlands, is unacceptable. Only in 1561 he had been in the Netherlands in the interest of the cause for which he labored. A more appreciative valuation of Dirk Philips' character, by Professor Henry E. Dosker, is found in *The Princeton Theological Review*, April, 1915, p. 306.

XIX

MENNO SIMONS ON VARIOUS POINTS OF DOCTRINE, PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE

1. Preliminary

Since our oral teaching and testimony can and may not be given, we are led and constrained to publish in writing our answer .... that by our written defense those of God-fearing, upright heart and conscience, be they magistrates or citizens, learned or unlearned, may know that we, as concerns the aforementioned accusations, are guiltless and are slandered and belied by our adversaries (496; II:300).

Since it is well known to many thousands of honest people (as I suppose) that we seek nothing upon this earth than in our weakness to walk willingly in the footsteps of Christ and, denying ourselves, to obey His Word, to again light the extinguished torch of the truth, point many to righteousness and by the help and grace of the Lord save our own souls, on which account we poor people must everywhere endure so much tribulation, misery, anxiety, cross and persecution, ... therefore no well-disposed person will think hard of me that I, by the Spirit and Word of my Lord to the best of my ability, openly set forth and defend the honor of my God, the salvation of my brethren, the foundation of my faith and the praise of Christ, my Lord (229; II:4).

Since there are many of you who treat God's children so inhumanly, as is evident, we have described concisely our practice, principles, faith and doctrine from the Word of God, and have published them in print, that all revilers, evil speakers and cruel persecutors may therefrom learn and understand our purpose, aim and work (51a; I:76b).

2. The Authority and Inerrancy of the Scriptures.

Dear reader, I admonish and advise you, if you seek God with all your heart and would not be deceived, do not depend upon men and the doctrine of men, however old, holy and excellent it may be esteemed, for one theologian is against the other, both in ancient and modern times; but build upon Christ and His Word alone, upon the sure teaching and practice of His holy apostles, and you will through the grace of God be kept safe from all false doctrine and from the power of the devil, and walk before your God with a confident and pious mind (22a; I:37).

This holy Christian church has only one doctrine—the pure, unmixed and unadulterated Word of God, the Gospel of grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. All teachings and decrees that do not accord with the doctrine of Christ, be they the teachings and opinions of doctors, decrees of popes, ecumenical councils, or anything else, are but teachings and commandments of men (Matt. 19:5), doctrines of devils (I Tim. 4:1) and therefore accursed (Gal. 7:8). We write and teach nothing but the pure, heavenly Word and the perfect commandments of Jesus Christ and His apostles (399; II:193b).

My dear brethren, against the aforesaid doctrines, ordinances, sacraments and life, no imperial decrees, papal bulls, or councils of the learned have any authority; no old usage, no human philosophy, no Origen, no Augustine, no Luther or Bucer, no prison, banishment or murdering will avail. It is, I repeat, the eternal, imperishable Word of God, and will abide forever. (445b; II:244b).

The first sign by which the Church of Christ may be known, is the salutary and unadulterated doctrine of His holy divine word.—In short, where the Church of Christ is, ... there His word is preached purely and rightly. The Church of Christ knows no other doctrine but the Word of the Lord (299a; II:81a).

I pray all God-fearing hearts, for Jesus' sake, to submit reason to the Word of the Lord and to think and believe of God

as the Scriptures require and teach, not to ascend higher or descend lower, but walk with a humble, contrite heart before the Lord and His church, and they shall find peace of conscience (563b; II:370a).

Think you, my friends, that the Lord is a dreamer or His Word a fable? Ah, no! not a letter will fall to the ground of all that He spoke (129b; I:175a).

But that he appeals to Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen and Augustine, my reply is, first, If these writers can support their teaching with the Word and command of God, we will admit that they are right. If not, then it is a doctrine of men and accursed according to the Scriptures. Gal. 1:8. (271b; II:49a)

We tell you the truth and lie not. If any one under the canopy of heaven can show us from Scripture that Jesus Christ, the Son of the Almighty God, the eternal wisdom and truth, whom alone we acknowledge as the lawgiver and teacher of the New Testament, has commanded one word to that effect, or that His holy apostles have ever taught or practiced the like, there is no need of an attempt to compel us by tyranny and torture. Only show us God's Word and our matter is settled. For we seek nothing else (God who is omniscient knows) than in our weakness to walk in obedience according to the divine ordinances, word and will, for which we poor persecuted people are shamefully reviled, banished, robbed and slain in many countries. (16b; I:31a).

Our salvation is wholly grounded upon and comprised in Jesus Christ and His holy Word and never in men nor in any other doctrine (448a; II:247a).

Again, I have no visions or angelic revelations, neither do I seek or desire such, lest I be thereby deceived. For Christ's Word alone is sufficient for me. If I do not follow His testimony, then verily all is lost. And even if I had such revelations, which is not the case, they could not deviate from the Word and spirit of Christ, or else they would be only imagination, seduction and satanic deception. (448b; II:248a).

Inasmuch as I daily see these terrible dangers, and from the beginning many an unwise soul has been misled, and many are

yet misled by false prophecies, smooth words, seeming holiness, lying wonders, boasting and false promises of the antichrists and false prophets who under the cloak of God's Word have ever sought their own honor and advantage, as was the case with the Romish popes, with John of Leyden at Münster and with others, --therefore I deem it needful and well sincerely to warn and admonish my beloved readers, not to accept my doctrine as the Gospel of Jesus Christ until they have investigated for themselves and found it to agree with the Spirit and Word of the Lord, that their faith may not be founded on me nor on any other teacher or writer, but solely on Jesus Christ. (449a; II:248b).

Nevertheless, every reader should know that however learned the before mentioned scholars and however unlearned I may be, the opinions of us all are of equal avail before God; for in divine things nothing that is pleasing to God can be instituted or practiced by us without the command of the Holy Scriptures, may we be ever so learned. For in the Holy Scriptures we are not pointed to these or other scholars, but to Jesus Christ alone. Whenever, therefore, such highly renowned men by their subtle sophistry and artful philosophy would take from us, or change, the plain, express ordinances of Jesus Christ and His apostles, we must, surely consider their doctrine in that respect as doctrine of man and false teaching (404b; II:199b).

3. The Trinity of God

We believe and confess with the Holy Scriptures that there is an only, eternal God who created heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is; a God whom heaven and the heaven of heavens can not comprehend; whose throne is heaven, and the earth is His footstool; who "hath measured the waters with the hollow of his hand, and meeted out the heavens with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance;" "who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen or can see;" who

is an almighty, powerful Ruler in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; whose strength, hand and power none can withstand; a God of gods and a Lord of lords, who is above all, mighty, holy, terrible, praiseworthy and wonderful; a consuming fire; whose kingdom, power, dominion, majesty and glory is eternal, and shall endure forever. And besides this only, eternal, living, almighty, overruling God and Lord we know no other. And since He is a Spirit so great and awe-inspiring, and invisible, He is also inexpressible, incomprehensible, indescribable, as may be deduced and understood from the following Scriptures: Deut. 4:35; 6:4; John 4:24; 1:18; Gen. 1:1; Psa. 33:6; Col. 1:16; Isa. 43:11; 44:6; 48:13; 40:12; Job 11:8; I Tim. 6:16; Eccl. 1:7; Matt. 11:27; Rev. 17:14; 19:16; Heb. 12:29; 1:8, 10.

This only, eternal, omnipotent, ineffable, invisible, inexpressible and indescribable God we believe and confess with the Scriptures to be the eternal, incomprehensible Father, with His eternal, incomprehensible Son, and with His eternal, incomprehensible Holy Spirit. The Father we confess to be truly Father: the Son truly Son and the Holy Spirit truly Holy Spirit, not carnal and comprehensible but spiritual and incomprehensible, for Christ says: "God is a Spirit." (387a; II:183).

John says: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." Read also Matt. 28:19; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:8; John 14:16; 15:26; I Cor. 12:11. And although they are three, yet in divinity, will, power and working they are one and can no more be separated from each other, than the sun, brightness and warmth, for the one is not without the other. — (390; II:187).

My brethren, understand all this in a divine and spiritual sense, and not in a human or carnal manner. Then you will indeed be satisfied with the plain, deep and simple testimony of the prophets, evangelists and apostles concerning this unfathomable mystery.

Dearly beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, take notice. Since the eternal God is such a great and terrible God, since Jesus Christ was born of the Father, as said, and the

attributes of God so richly abound in Him; also, as the prophets, evangelists and apostles so strongly declare, preach and teach that He is God, and as the Scriptures so abundantly teach and testify the same of the Holy Ghost, and confess that the eternal Father with His eternal Son and Holy Spirit in their divine nature, state, power, glory and sovereignty are ineffable, inexpressible and incomprehensible, as may be plainly understood from the cited Scriptures, for it is all Spirit and God and therefore beyond human comprehension and wisdom; therefore I earnestly pray, admonish and desire all my beloved brethren in Christ Jesus, not to accept and consent to any speculations, new teachings or expositions of any man, be it of whom it may, concerning this incomprehensible majesty of God (390b; II:188).

My dear brethren, I for myself confess that I would rather die than to believe and teach to my brethren a single word concerning the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, at variance with the express testimony of God's Word, as it is so clearly given through the mouth of the prophets, evangelists and apostles.

All who abide honestly and humbly by the Word of God, as testified through the prophets, the evangelists and the apostles, and accept and believe it although they can not fully comprehend it, avoiding all human subtlety, disputing, explaining, distorting and conjecture regarding these unfathomable depths, will by God's grace stand securely in all trials, and walk with a peaceful, cheerful, conscience before their God all the days of their life (391a; II:188b).

4. Christ; His Deity and Humanity

We teach and believe that Jesus Christ is God's first and only begotten Son, the incomprehensible, eternal Word, by whom all things are created, the first born of every creature, Col. 1:15; that He became a true man in Mary, the immaculate virgin, through the almighty, eternal Father's eternal Spirit and power, beyond the comprehension and knowledge of men; sent and given unto us out of pure mercy and grace, from the Father;

the express image of the invisible God and the brightness of His glory, Heb. 1:3.

We teach and believe that this first and only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, is our only and eternal Messiah, prophet, teacher and high priest .... through whom we all who believe from our hearts, have the forgiveness of our sins, grace, favor, mercy, liberty, peace, life eternal, a reconciled Father, and free access to God in the Spirit, and all this through His merits, righteousness, intercession and blood, and not through our own works. Behold, this is the very summary of our belief concerning Christ, our Savior, the Son of God (79b; I:113).

All promises given the fathers, all expectations of the patriarchs, the whole figurative law and all prophecies of the prophets are fulfilled in and through Christ.—In short He is our only and eternal mediator, advocate, highpriest, propitiator and intercessor, our head and brother. And since we know all this by faith, therefore I say we also observe His word faithfully, hear His voice and implicitly follow His example and counsel, and depart from ungodliness. The heart is changed, the mind is renewed and with Moses we rely on the future promises as though they were placed before our eyes, and patiently wait for them with faithful Abraham till we with all the chosen shall in reality inherit them (82a; I:116).

We believe and confess that this same eternal, wise, almighty, holy, true, living and incomprehensible Word, Christ Jesus who in the beginning was with God and was God — in the fullness of time, according to the unchangeable purpose and promise of the Father, became a true, visible, suffering, hungry, thirsty, mortal man, in Mary, the pure virgin, and was born of her, through the working and overshadowing of the Holy Ghost; yea that He was like unto us in all things except sin; that He grew up as other men and at the appointed time was baptized and entered upon His ministry, and obediently fulfilled the office of grace and perfect love which was enjoined upon Him by the Father. He effaced and fulfilled the hand writing against us, that is the law, and at last in this His human flesh, nature and weakness, in which also He has sighed, wept and prayed unto

the Father, has through the eternal Spirit of His heavenly Father offered Himself, has sweated water and blood and purified our consciences of dead works, that we should serve the true and living God; and all who believe in Him have through Him received grace, mercy, remission of sins, and eternal life, by means of His precious blood which He, in His great love, according to the good pleasure of the Father has offered and shed for us poor sinners on the cross, and has thus become our only and eternal high priest, reconciler, mercy-seat, mediator and advocate with God, His Father. For, as God, the almighty Father, through His almighty Word, Christ Jesus, has created Adam and Eve, so He would also through Him, after they had been seduced by the serpent, restore them together with all their descendants, and save them — that we might give no one, neither in heaven nor upon earth, the praise for our salvation, but only the eternal Father through Jesus Christ, by the illumination of the Holy Ghost. This may suffice on the Incarnation. Matt. 1:16, 25; 5:4; Mark 15:37; Luke 2:7; 22:67; 23:46; John 15:9, 10; 11:26; Phil. 2:5, 7; Col. 2:14, 12; 1:13, 16; Heb. 3:2; Eph. 2:12; 1:7; Rom. 8:32; 3:24, 25; 5:11, 12; Isa. 53:13; I Pet. 1:19; Rev. 1:8; II Cor. 5:14.

Further, beloved brethren, we believe and confess Jesus Christ to be truly God with His Father; and this because of the divine glory, works and attributes, which are found in such abundance with Him (388; II:183).

Behold, beloved brethren, as the throne of Christ is an eternal throne (Heb 1:10) and the Scriptures confess Him to be God, and also testify that He founded heaven and earth, that He has all power in heaven and on earth, that He is the first and the last, that He searcheth the hearts and reins; whom we should serve and worship, who forgives sin and bestows eternal life, in whom we must believe and who at the last day will raise us from the dead and judge us, as He has said, so it is incontrovertible that Jesus Christ must be truly God with His Father; for God gives His glory to none other; and these are all glories, powers and attributes which belong to no one in heaven nor upon earth, except alone the only, eternal, and true

God; this all who are taught of God must fully admit and confess (389; II:185).

And the incomprehensible, inexpressible, spiritual, eternal divine Being which is divinely and incomprehensibly begotten of the Father, before every creature, we believe and confess to be Jesus Christ, the first and only begotten Son of God, "the first born of every creature," the eternal wisdom, the power of God, the eternal light, truth and life, the eternal Word.—He is the eternal, wise, almighty, holy, true, living and incomprehensible Word, who in the beginning was with God and was God, by whom all things were made and without whom was not anything made that was made and who will remain forever. And therefore He says, "Before Abraham was I am." And again John the Baptists says, "After me cometh one that was before me." Yea He had this divine glory with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, His Father. Therefore we confess with John the Baptist, Nathaniel, Martha, and Peter that He is the Son of the living God.

Beloved brethren, understand me rightly, I say eternal wisdom, eternal power. For, as we believe and confess that the Father was from eternity and will eternally remain, yea that He is the First and the Last, so we also freely believe and confess that His wisdom, His power, His light, His truth, His life, His Word, Christ Jesus, has from eternity been with Him and in Him, yea that He is the Alpha and Omega, or else we should have to confess that this begotten, incomprehensible truly divine Being, Christ Jesus, whom the church fathers called a person, through whom the eternal Father has made all things, has had a beginning like a creature; an opinion which all true Christians look upon as a terrible curse, blasphemy, and abomination (387; II:184).

I have taught Jesus Christ and Him crucified, very God and very man, who before all time in an incomprehensible, inexpressible and indescribable manner was born of Thee—Thy eternal Word and wisdom, the brightness of Thy glory and the express image of Thy person, and that in the fullness of

time, through the power of Thy Holy Spirit, He became, in Mary, the unspotted virgin, very flesh and blood, a visible, tangible and mortal man, like unto Adam and all his posterity in all things, but without sin; born of the lineage or seed of Abraham and David, died, buried, rose again, ascended into heaven, and thus became before Thee our only and eternal advocate, mediator, intercessor and redeemer (174b; I:225).

The prophets confessed Christ to be their mighty God and everlasting Father (Isa. 9:6), their Jehovah who should be their and our righteousness (Jer. 23:6; 33:16); that His going forth was from everlasting. — Also, all the holy apostles (Matt. 14:33), the angel of God (Luke 1:28), the Father (Matt. 3:17; 3:17; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35) and Christ Himself (John 9:35), John the Baptist (John 1:34; 3:28), Nathaniel (John 1:49), and Martha (John 11:27) confessed Him to be the true Son of the true and living God (571a; II:378).

As He is the only and true Son of God, having no other origin but of God, He must also have the nature of the One of whom He is: this is too plain to be controverted. That He had the divine nature He has proven by these manifest apparent attributes of the true divine nature, as by His perfect righteousness, truth, holiness, love and His wonderful works of power. As He had the divine nature, I say, on account of His divine origin, He also had the unblemished, pure human nature (like unto the nature of Adam before the fall) and that by reason of His evident true humanity. For as truly as He was the Father's almighty Word from eternity, so truly also He, in the fullness of time became a true, mortal man (John 1:14; I John 1:1).

That He had the true human nature, as well as the divine, He has shown by the apparent evidence of the real human nature, as by hungering, thirsting, being weary, sighing, weariness, suffering and death (589b; II:392).

Christ has fully portrayed Himself in His Word, namely as far as He desires that we should comprehend, know and follow Him and become like Him, not as concerns His divine nature according to which He is the true image of the invisible God, "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his

person," Heb. 1:3, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see," I Tim. 6:16, but in His life and conversation here upon earth among men, He has given us an example and pattern, by word and deed, which we should follow and to which we should conform (180b; I:233a).

Besides, beloved brethren, we believe and confess Christ Jesus with His heavenly Father to be truly God; and that because of the plain testimony of the holy prophets, evangelists and apostles (389a; II:186a).

Behold, faithful brethren, here you have the incomprehensible birth of Christ, His divine glory, working and power, and numerous precious and plain testimonies of the holy prophets, evangelists and apostles, all of whom with invincible power and clearness testify and point out the true, incomprehensible divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ (389b; II:186b).

Indeed, Christ Himself had to suffer death because He confessed Himself to be the Son of God (545; II:352).

5. His Office

To such then [who are convicted of their sinful life] Christ who is a comforter of all contrite hearts says, Believe the Gospel, that is, Fear not, be of good cheer; I will not punish nor chastise, but heal, comfort and give life, Isa. 41:10; a bruised reed will I not break and the smoking flax [German translation: the faintly burning wick] will I not quench, Matt. 12:20. I will help that which is broken, will heal that which is sick, I will tie up that which is wounded and seek that which is lost, Ezek. 34:16. For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32. I am come into the world according to the pleasure of my Father, and through the power of the Holy Ghost have become a visible, tangible, mortal man, in all things like unto you, yet without sin, Heb. 4:15.

I am the Son of the almighty God, Luke 1:32, anointed with the Holy Ghost to preach the Gospel to the poor, and to

bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to give sight to the blind, to open the prison to them that are bound, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18. Believe the gospel. I am the Lamb that was offered for you. I take away the sins of the world. My Father has made me unto you wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, I Cor. 1:30. Whosoever believeth on me shall not be ashamed, yea all that believe that I am He, have eternal life. John 3:16. (9b; I:21a)

Christ has taught us the true way, fulfilled the law for us, reconciled us to the Father and redeemed us by His precious blood and bitter death; has conquered hell, the devil, sin and death and obtained for us grace, favor, mercy, and eternal life. And therefore the sorrowful, contrite hearts which saw before them, through the terrible threatening law, nothing but the wrath of God, are again revived; they take courage, become peaceful and joyous in the Holy Ghost. (83a; I:117b).

6. The Incarnation

Faithful reader, observe; just as I do not comprehend the almighty, only and eternal God in His divine nature, in the dominion of His glory, in the creation and preservation of His creatures, in the recompensation of both the good and the evil, and in many of His works, yet I do truly believe in Him as such, and for this reason: because the Scripture teaches it, so likewise I can not comprehend how, or in what manner the incomprehensible, eternal Word became flesh, or man, in Mary. Nevertheless, I do truly believe that He became man because the Scripture teaches it (369; II:160b).

Inasmuch as we clearly find and know that the Holy Ghost has not revealed this mystery [of the Incarnation] in the Scriptures that He has not revealed it unto us in any manner, neither by any prophet, nor apostle, nor by the Son Himself, and inasmuch as it is manifest that it can not be fathomed by reason ... and besides we learn from history and find in our own time that many sharp eyes have been blinded by this impenetrable bright-

ness, therefore I warn all pious hearts that would walk with a clear conscience before their God, not to speculate about this ineffable and indescribable majesty of the incomprehensible, eternal Godhead, and not to conclude, assert, teach or maintain above that which the Holy Spirit has revealed and taught us in His holy word (563b; II:369).

And therefore I say that I do not at all undertake to reason out this incomprehensible point, but will follow the word of my Lord which is quite clear in this instance (595a; II:398a).

7. The Holy Ghost

As we have now pointed out and confessed our faith and doctrine of the true divinity of Christ, we will also now, by the grace of God, set forth in few words our faith and confession of the Holy Ghost. Let the God-fearing judge. We believe and confess the Holy Ghost to be a true, real, or personal Holy Ghost, and this in a divine sense — even as the Father is truly Father and the Son truly Son; which Holy Ghost is [in His nature] incomprehensible, inexpressible and indescribable, as we have also testified of the Father and the Son. He is divine in His attributes, proceeding from the Father through the Son, although He ever remains with God and in God and is never separated in His nature from the Father and the Son. And the reason why we confess Him to be such a true and personal Holy Spirit is, because we are impelled to it by the Scriptures (389b; II:186b).

He guides us into all truth; He justifies us; He cleanses, sanctifies, pacifies, consoles, reproves, cheers and assures us; He testifies to our spirit that we are the children of God. — Yea, my brethren, from these plain Scriptures, testimonies and references and a geat many other texts which are too lengthy to quote, and which may be found in the Scriptures and read, we believe the Holy Ghost to be the true Spirit of God who adorns us with His heavenly and divine gifts, frees us from sin, makes us cheerful, peaceful, pious, satisfies our hearts and minds and makes us holy in Christ Jesus. (390a; II:187a).

8. Sin

As Adam and Eve, then, were bitten and poisoned by the infernal serpent and became of sinful nature, and would have been subject to eternal death if God had not again accepted them in grace through Christ Jesus, so also all we who are born of them, are by birth of a sinful nature. — We can not be delivered therefrom (we speak of those who have come to years of understanding and have committed sin), unless we accept Christ Jesus, the only and eternal means of grace, by true and unfeigned faith, and thus look upon the brazen serpent which is lifted up by God, our heavely Father, as a sign of salvation for us poisoned sinners (Num. 21:9; John 3:14; 8:28) (461b; II:261b).

Wherever these two, namely original sin — the mother — and actual sins — the fruits — are in evidence and in power, there is no forgiveness nor promise of life, but there abide wrath and death, unless they are repented of, as the Scriptures teach. If this inherent sin is to lose its strength in us and actual sin be forgiven, we must believe the word of the Lord, be born again by faith, and in the strength of this new birth, through true repentance, resist the inherent sin, die unto actual sin and be spiritually minded (508a; II:313a).

I did not know my condition as long as it was not pointed out to me by Thy Spirit. I thought I was a Christian, but when I proved myself rightly, I realized that I was quite earthly, carnal and without Thy Word. — O, dear Lord, I knew myself not till I viewed myself in Thy Word; then I learned to know with Paul my blindness, nakedness, uncleanness, depraved nature, and that nothing good dwelt in my flesh. (167b; I:217b).

And although such wilful blasphemy and sin had no offering in Israel (Num. 15) and the sin against the Holy Ghost has no forgiveness, as Christ says, yet I would pray and advise all the God-fearing, as far as I am able, that if any should after his confession and baptism again fall into open works of the flesh, vice and deadly blasphemy and persist in the same, they should consider the matter in all wisdom and not pass an unseasonable and undue sentence; for the Lord to whom nothing is concealed

knows what sin was committed; whether he has sinned against the Holy Ghost or not; but let them admonish such according to the word of the Lord. If he be converted, if he show true fruits of repentance according to the Scriptures, if he again give evidence of a broken, contrite and penitent heart, of a peaceful, joyous and upright mind, then it is manifest that he did not commit the sin against the Holy Ghost. But if he remain unrepentant, continue in his perverseness, and wantonly despise Christ and His Word to the end, then his works show clearly what sin he has committed, and that his end and reward will be death. Behold, kind reader, thus we believe that all sins, both inward and outward, have their reconciliation in the merits and the power of the blood of the Lord, if truly repented of, according to the Scriptures (509a; II:314a).

9. The Law

Wherever the law is preached rightly and the hearer takes it to heart by faith, it manifests its nature and power. There we find a contrite mind, a repenting, humble heart, a conscience which trembles before the word of God, and the true fear of God which quenches, subdues and drives out sin, as Sirach says. For this is the real work and object of the law: To reveal unto us the will of God, indicate our sin, threaten us with the Lord's wrath and punishment, to announce death and to point us to Christ, that we may be truly humbled in heart before God's countenance, die unto sin and seek and find the only and eternal medicine and remedy for our souls, Jesus Christ (285a; II:65a).

10. The Atonement

Therefore the incomprehensible, eternal Word through whom Adam and Eve were created, by whom all things are and must forever remain, the almighty power and wisdom of God, must become man that He might bruise the head of the deceiving serpent, for the salvation of the condemned Adam and all his descendants; that he might overcome in temptation, fulfill the holy and unchangeable will of the Father; that the dominion

and power of the devil might be destroyed, and that He might by His willing obedience and spotless offering pay the great debt of Adam and put away deserved death by His undeserved death (373a; II:165a).

I think this may well be called a joyous Gospel and glad tidings to all convicted and troubled souls who, through the law, have been brought to a knowledge of their sin and know that they are in danger of eternal death, who tremble before the righteous judgment and wrath of God—that the almighty, eternal God and Father has so loved us poor, perishing sinners who were so far estranged from Him and according to His righteous judgment had deserved eternal death, that He sent into this world His almighty, eternal Word, His only, eternal and beloved Son, the brightness of His glory, as a poor mortal man, like unto Adam before the fall, as a proof and means of His grace; and that He through His perfect righteousness, willing obedience and innocent death, has brought us from the kingdom and dominion of Satan into the kingdom of His divine grace and eternal peace (374b; II:167a).

There will in eternity be found no other remedy for our sins, neither in heaven nor upon earth, neither works, merits nor ordinances (even though they are observed according to the Scriptures), neither persecution nor tribulation, neither the innocent blood of the saints, nor angels, nor men, nor any other means, but alone the immaculate blood of the Lamb which out of pure grace, mercy and love was shed once for all for the remission of our sins (113b; I:155b).

They all seek some remedy for their sins, but the only true remedy, Christ, they do not recognize; they have therefore contrived so many remedies that we can neither describe nor relate them all, such as the Romish indulgences, holy water, fastings, confessions, masses, pilgrimages, infant baptism, bread and wine, etc. (32a; I:51a).

My dear reader, the truth we testify to you in Christ; you may believe, do, hope and seek where and what you choose, we are assured that you will in eternity find no other remedy for your sins which will avail before God, than the one we have

pointed out to you, which is Jesus Christ, else all Scripture must be erroneous and false (32b; I:51b).

All those, therefore, that seek other remedies for their sins, however great and holy they may appear, than the remedy provided by God alone, deny the Lord's death, which He suffered for us, and His innocent blood which He shed for us. (33a; I:52a).

For how could God show and express His love to us more perfectly than that He sent His eternal wisdom and truth, His pure, powerful Word, His blessed Son by whom He created all things, who was like unto Him, and His image, and made Him lower than the angels, a poor, despised, suffering, mortal man and servant who alone had to bear the labor, transgression, curse and death of the whole world. Yea, He so humbled Himself that He became the most despised of men. (I Pet 2:24; Isa. 53:6). — Say, beloved, who ever heard of greater love? (527a; II:332a).

11. Repentance

Behold, dear reader, such repentance we teach, namely to die to the old sinful life and to live no longer according to the lusts of the flesh, but do as David did. When he was reproved by the prophet for his sin, he wept bitterly, cried to God, forsook evil and committed such sinful abominations no more. Peter sinned very grievously once and no more. Matthew, after his call, did not return into his old life. Zaccheus and the sinful woman did not again become guilty of the impure works of darkness. Zaccheus made restitution to those whom he had overcharged and defrauded and gave half of his goods to the poor and distressed. The woman wept very bitterly and washed the feet of the Lord with her tears; she anointed them with precious ointment and sat humbly at His feet to listen to His blessed words. These are the true fruits of that repentance which is acceptable to the Lord (7a; I:18a).

Such repentance we teach, and no other, namely that no one may rightfully glory in God's grace, forgiveness of his sin and

the merits of Christ, unless the fruits of true repentance are found in his life. It is not enough that we say, We are Abraham's children, that is that we bear the Christian name, but we must have the works of Abraham (John 8:39). We must walk as all true children of God are bidden and commanded in the Word of the Lord; as John says: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and the truth is not in us. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:6, 7). (7b; I:18b)

But if you would rightly confess and repent, and receive true absolution of God, approach Him with a believing, penitent, contrite heart, with a sorrowing, distressed mind, forsake sin, do justly and right to your neighbor, love, help, serve, reprove and comfort him, as you ought. And if you have sinned against him or in any way taken unfair advantage of him, confess it to him and satisfy him. Behold this is the only true Auricular Confession and penance taught in the Word of God (107b; I:148a).

12. Faith

True faith which avails before God, is a living and saving power which is, through the preaching of the holy Word, bestowed of God on the heart; moving, changing and regenerating it to newness of mind. It destroys all ungodliness, all pride, unholy ambition and selfishness, makes us children in malice, etc. Behold, such is the faith which the Scriptures teach us, and not a vain, dead, and unfruitful illusion, as the world dreams (280a; II:59a).

Yes, dear reader, true Christian faith as it is required in Scripture, is so living, active and strong in all those who through the grace of the Lord have rightly obtained it, that they do not hesitate to forsake father, mother, wife, children, money and possessions for the Word and testimony of the Lord; to suffer all manner of scorn, disgrace, hardship and prison, and finally to have their weak bodies burned at the stake, as may be frequently seen in many pious children of God and faithful witnesses

for Christ especially in these our Netherlands (115b; I:158a).

Since then faith so fully realizes that God can not break His promise, but must keep it, because He is the truth and can not lie, as was said, therefore faith makes the believers frank-hearted, joyous and cheerful in the Spirit, though they be confined in prisons and bonds, or suffer death by water, fire or the sword. For they are assured in the spirit through faith that God can not break His promise toward them, but will fulfill it in due time. They believe in Christ in whom the promise has been sealed, they recognize through Him also His grace, word and will, notwithstanding that in former times they lived so ungodly and walked according to the flesh (116b; I:159a).

But you should know and understand that the righteousness which avails and ever will avail before God, consists not in ceremonies and works, but in a true, fruitful faith and nothing else. For the faith which is born of the word of God can not be without fruits, except in those who grieve the Holy Ghost, as said above. True faith ever exercises itself in works of righteousness, it willingly shows all obedience and with cheerfulness and zeal submits not only to the ordinance of baptism, but to all words and works which God, our gracious Father, through His beloved Son has so clearly taught and ordained in the holy Gospel (420a; II:217a).

All who can believe this from their hearts as certain and true, are sealed through the word of God in their heart and spirit, are changed in the inner man, receive the fear and love of God, and out of their faith bring forth righteousness, fruit, power, an unblameable life and a new being, as Paul says, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Through faith, says Peter, God purifies our hearts. And thus the fruits of righteousness follow invariably out of an upright, unfeigned, true Christian faith. Observe this well. (80a; I:114b).

Not, dear reader, that we believe that faith merits this on account of its own worth; by no means; but the pleasure of God has attached His promise to true, genuine faith through the Word. Faith saves, not through its own worth or merit, but through the promise which is attached to it. (116a; I:159a).

This, I say, is our fundamental doctrine and by the grace of God will ever so remain; for we truly know and confess that it is the invincible word and truth of the Lord. Therefore we testify before you and before all the world that we do not agree with those who teach and introduce a historical, dead faith without a change of heart, Spirit, power and fruit. Secondly we also disown the teaching of those who would be saved by their own works; and this for reasons that have been stated (464a; II:264b).

Behold, beloved sirs, friends and brethren, all who believe the Gospel are those of whom the Scriptures say: „To them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of flesh nor of the will of man, but of God, John 1:12, 13. They are those who by faith are justified and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, Rom. 5:1, 2. This all is of grace and love, as Paul teaches and says, All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, Rom. 3:23-25. There is none that of himself can rejoice in his faith; it is the gift of God, Eph. 2:8.

All who receive it from God, receive a tree full of all manner of good and precious fruit. Blessed are they who receive this gift of God, for it surpasses all gold, silver and precious stone; there is nothing that may be compared with it. He who receives it, receives Christ Jesus, forgiveness of sins, a new mind and life eternal. For the true faith which is acceptable to God can not be idle; it must bring forth its fruits and prove its kind; it works continuously in love, walks willingly in righteousness, mortifies the flesh, crucifies lusts and desires, rejoices in the cross of Christ, renews and regenerates, quickens, makes free, gives liberty and peace in Christ Jesus. Behold, such a faith, we say, is God's gift by which the righteous liveth, as the Scripture saith, as did Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Rahab,

and all the saints. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit after its kind, Matt. 7:17; every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, however many leaves it may have, must be accursed and consumed by fire, Matt. 3:10. So also an unfruitful, powerless faith, such as the whole world has, which does not work by love, be it ever so learned, wise, eloquent, and miracle working, is in the sight of God unclean, dead and accursed.

Therefore, we exhort you, with Christ Jesus, "Believe the gospel," that is, believe the joyful news, the message of divine grace through Jesus Christ. Cease from sinning, manifest repentance for your past lives, submit to the word and will of the Lord, and you will become fellow citizens, children and heirs of the new, heavenly Jerusalem, freed of all your enemies, hell, death, sin and the devil, if you but walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life (9b; I:21b).

If you accept and believe these words of Christ with the whole heart, that the almighty, eternal Father has so loved you and the whole human family, that He sent His incomprehensible, eternal Word, Wisdom, Truth and Son, by whom He created the heavens, earth, the sea and the fullness thereof, His eternal glory, into this vale of tears, that He let Him become a poor, suffering man, that He let Him for the sake of the sins of us all endure hunger and thirst, be slandered, apprehended, crowned with thorns, scourged, crucified and killed, it can not fail that your old carnal mind must become a regenerated spiritual mind, your thoughts chaste and pure, your words discreet and well seasoned and your whole life pious and unblamable (114b; I:157a).

Observe here that true Christian faith through grace is the only fountain whence flows not only the contrite new life but also obedience as concerns the evangelical ceremonies, such as baptism and the Lord's supper, not as compelled by law, for the rod of the oppressor is broken, but through the voluntary, submissive spirit of love which by virtue of its Christ-like nature is willing and ready for every good work in obedience to the holy divine word (115a; I:158a).

13. Justification by Faith

In the third place, we teach with Christ and say, "Believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). This Gospel is the joyful tidings of God's favor and grace toward us, and of the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ. This message faith accepts through the Holy Ghost; the believer does not behold his former righteousness or unrighteousness, but, like Abraham, "against hope believes in hope" (Rom. 4:18) with the whole heart depends entirely upon the grace, word and promise of the Lord, since he well knows that God is true and His promises can not fail. Thereby the heart is renewed, converted, made spiritually minded, peaceful and joyous, a child of God is born. The believer approaches with full confidence the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16) and becomes a joint heir with Christ and of eternal life. (9a; I:20a).

Behold, kind reader, we do not seek our salvation in works, words or sacraments, as do the theologians, although they ascribe this to us, but we seek it alone in Jesus Christ, and through no other means in heaven or earth. In this only means we comfort ourselves and in no other. We hope by the grace of God to abide in it unto death.

But that we avoid sinful works and desire to conform ourselves in our weakness to His word and commandment, this we do because He has thus taught and commanded us. For whosoever does not walk according to His doctrine, testifies by his deeds that he does not believe in Him nor know Him, and that he is not in the communion of the saints. (John 15:7; I John 3:10; 5:10; II John 6).

All those, now, who with believing hearts accept and receive this means of divine grace, Christ Jesus, and believe and confess that through His sacrifice, death and blood their sins are forgiven, that His wrath will nevermore be upon them, that they will not be lost, that He accepts them as His beloved sons and daughters and gives them eternal life; all such are of a peaceable and joyous spirit and give thanks to God with renewed hearts;

for the power of the Spirit quickens and changes them into newness of life, and they walk thus by the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit in the power of the new birth, according to the measure of their faith, in obedience to their God who has shown them so great love (462a; II:262a).

Those who trust in their works or ceremonies for salvation deny thereby the grace and merits of Christ. For if our reconciliation consisted in works and ceremonies, grace would come to naught and the merits and virtue of the blood of Christ would all be void. O no! it is grace and will be grace in all eternity, all that the merciful Father through His dear Son and Holy Spirit has done for us grievous sinners (115b; I:158a).

He [Gellius Faber], I presume, well knows that we emphatically teach that by no outward works, however great and good they may appear, we could be saved or entirely please God, for they all are in every instance mixed with imperfection and weakness, and through them, on account of the corruption of the flesh, we can not acquire the righteousness required in the commandments. We point therefore alone to Jesus Christ who is our only and eternal righteousness, reconciliation and propitiation with the Father, and know of no trust in our own works. My reader, I write the truth in Christ and lie not (246a; II:25a).

If God should judge us according to our own worthiness, righteousness, works and merits, and not according to His great goodness and mercy, then I confess with holy David, that no man could stand before His judgment (Psa. 143:2; 130:3). Therefore it is far from us that we trust in or console ourselves with anything but the grace of God though Christ Jesus; for it is He and none other who has perfectly fulfilled and satisfied the righteousness required by God. We are also aware, by the grace of God, that all saints, from the beginning, have lamented the proneness to sin, of their flesh, as e. g. Moses, David, Job, Isaiah, Paul, James, and John.

But for Christ's sake we are in grace, for Christ's sake we are heard, for Christ's sake our failings and weaknesses which are committed involuntarily, are remitted. For it is He who stands between His Father and His imperfect children with His

perfect righteousness, and with His innocent blood and death, and intercedes for all those who believe on Him and who by faith are guided through the divine word, turn from evil, follow that which is good, and who sincerely desire with Paul that they may attain the perfection which is in Christ.

Mark, beloved reader, we do not believe nor teach that salvation is of our merits and works, as our opponents accuse us without any truth, but solely by grace, through Christ Jesus, as has been said (463a; II:263a).

14. Regeneration

Do you think, beloved, that the new birth is nothing else but that which the poor world hitherto has thought it to consist in, namely immersion in the water or the saying of the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost?" No, dear brethren, no. The new birth consists verily not in water nor in words, but it is the heavenly, quickening power of God in our hearts which comes from God and through the preaching of the divine word, if we accept the same by faith, touches, pierces, renews and changes our hearts, so that we are converted from unbelief to faith, from unrighteousness to righteousness, from evil to good, from carnality to spirituality, from the earthly to the heavenly, from the evil nature of Adam to the good nature of Jesus Christ (419a; II:215a).

God does not seek words nor appearance but power and deed. Do you think it sufficient if you know Christ only according to the flesh? Or if you but say that you believe on Him, that you are baptized and are Christians, and that you are purchased by the blood and death of Christ? Ah no! I have told you often and tell you again, you must be born of God and your life changed and converted in such a manner that you are new men in Christ, that Christ be in you and you in Christ, or you can never be Christians, for, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (127b; I:172b).

Here I would call on all the high and mighty lords, princes,

and rulers under all the canopy of heaven, also on all the popes, cardinals, bishops, all the learned and scholars who from the beginning have broken and obscured the Scriptures, to show us one single word in the whole Bible (I say in the Bible, for human fables and lies we do not regard) that an unbelieving, refractory, carnal man, without true repentance and regeneration, ever was or ever will be saved, simply because he boasts of faith and the death of Christ, or attends the mass and services of the priests, as the whole world does. If so, they would have gained the point. But from the beginning this never has been, nor will be to the end of time. For if such impious men without repentance and regeneration could be saved by hearing masses and confessing, as they, poor people, without the warrant of Scripture hope, then it might of a truth be said that the aforementioned means (though they are idolatrous) were stronger than the word of the Lord. For the Word knows no mass, but says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Then would also Moses and the prophets, Christ and His apostles, have been false witnesess; they would have miserably deceived us poor people by directing us upon so narrow a path (126b; I:171b).

All who accept by faith this grace in Christ which is preached through the Gospel, and adhere to it from their hearts, are born anew of God, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Their heart and mind is changed and renewed; yea, they are transferred from Adam into Christ. They walk in newness of life, as willing and obedient children, in the grace that is extended to them. They are renewed, I say, have become poor in spirit, meek, merciful, compassionate, peaceable, patient, hungry and thirsty after righteousness, ready to suffer for the truth; they strive steadfastly by good works after eternal life; for they are believing, they are born of God, they are in Christ and Christ is in them; they partake of His Spirit and nature and thus live by the power of Christ which is in them, according to the Word of the Lord. This is what it means, according to the Scriptures, to believe, to be Christians, to be in Christ and Christ in us.

My dear reader, here take notice how vastly this sinful

woman differs after conversion in her faith and conduct, from the faith and conduct of the world. They are like the sinful woman before her conversion, but not after conversion. Whether such are believers, I will let the intelligent reader to reflect upon with the Spirit and word of the Lord.

I know of a certainty that a proud, haughty, man whoever he may be, is no Christian, neither is an avaricious, selfish man, or a drunken, intemperate man, or an unchaste, lustful man, or a wrangling, envious man, or a disobedient, idolatrous man, or a false, lying man, or an unfaithful, thievish man, or a defaming, backbiting man, or a bloodthirsty, unmerciful, revengeful man a Christian, even if he were baptized a hundred times and kept the Lord's supper daily; for it is not the ordinances or rites, such as baptism and the Supper, but a true Christian faith with its unblamable good fruits, of which the ordinances testify, that makes a true Christian and has the promise of life.

Here neither masses, holy water, holy days, rosaries, auricular confession or absolution avail, but only a believing, contrite, broken heart, spirit and mind, a penitent, regenerated, new heart, a pious, fully surrendered life (107a; I:147b).

To teach and believe that regeneration is obtained through baptism, my brethren, is terrible idolatry and blasphemy against the blood of Christ. For there is neither in heaven nor on earth any other remedy for our sins, be they evil propensities or transgressions, than the blood of Christ alone, as we have often shown in our first writings (I Pet. 1:19; I John 1:7; Col. 1:20). If then we ascribe remission of sin to baptism and not to the blood of Christ, we make of baptism a golden calf and place it in Christ's stead. For if we could be washed or cleansed by baptism, then Christ and His merits would be displaced, except we confess that there are two means for the remission of our sins, namely baptism and the blood of Christ. But this is not the case, nor will be in eternity, for the immaculate, most precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ shall and must have the glory, as all prophets and apostles have so clearly prophesied and testified throughout the Scriptures (406a; II:200b).

My dear reader, I warn you with a faithful heart to take

heed. He can not save you, nor pardon your sins, nor show you His mercy and grace, except according to His word; namely, if you repent, if you believe, if you are born of Him, if you do what He has commanded you and walk even as He walked. For if He could save sinful, carnal man without regeneration, faith and repentance, He would not have taught us the truth. He is the truth and there is no lie in Him. Therefore I tell you again that ye can not be reconciled with all your masses, matins, vespers, ceremonies, sacraments, councils, statutes and commandments which are under the whole heavens and which the popes and their followers have made from the beginning. For they are detestations and not reconciliations; of this I warn you. Christ says, "In vain do they honor me, for they teach the commandments of men." But, first and above all, if you would be saved, your earthly, carnal, ungodly life must be changed. For all the Scriptures, with all their admonitions, threatening, reproving, miracles, examples, ceremonies and ordinances teach us nothing but repentance and a new life. And if you do not repent, there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can help you. for without true repentance one is comforted in vain. We must be born from above, must be changed and renewed in our hearts and thus be transplanted from the unrighteous and evil nature of Adam into the righteous and good nature of Christ, or we can not be helped in eternity by any means, whether divine or human.

That regeneration of which we write, from which follows the contrite, pious life having the promise, comes alone from the Word of the Lord if it is rightly taught and is through the Holy Spirit rightly received into the heart through faith. (124b; I:169a).

15. The New Life

Behold, beloved reader, thus true faith or true knowledge begets love and love begets obedience to the commandment of God, as said above. — For true evangelical faith is of such nature that it can not be workless or idle; it ever manifests

itself in all righteousness and works of love, it dies unto self, seeks and fears God and serves Him from the inmost soul, it clothes the destitute, feeds the hungry, consoles the comfortless, shelters the homeless, aids the oppressed, returns good for evil, serves those that injure, prays for those that persecute, teaches, admonishes, and reproves with the word of the Lord, seeks that which is lost, binds up that which is wounded, heals that which is sick, and protects that which is sound. The persecution, suffering and anxiety which befalls it for the sake of the truth of the Lord is to it a glorious joy and consolation (446b; II:246a).

For this can never fail; where there is true Christian faith, there is also dying to sin, a new creature, true repentance, a sincere, regenerated, unblameable Christian. One does no longer live according to the lusts of sin but according to the will of Him who purchased us with His blood, drew us by His Spirit and regenerated us by His Word, namely Jesus Christ.

But where faith exists only in the mouth, and where righteousness, a new mind and a pious life do not follow, there is nothing but unbelief, hypocrisy and falsehood, no matter how much talking and disputing about the Scripture there may be. This rule will remain firm and can never be broken. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die" (83b; I:118a).

I say again, he who believes and accepts this can never be prevented, by angel or devil, life or death, but he will and must love again from his inmost heart the merciful Father who has manifested so great grace and love toward us grievous sinners, yea praise, honor, thank, serve Him and be obedient to Him all the days of his life. For this is the greatest delight and joy of the believers, that they in their weakness may walk and live according to the will and word of the Lord. It can not be otherwise, but where the unfeigned pure love of God dwells, there must be the voluntary ready service of that love, namely the keeping of His commandments. (81a; I:115).

True evangelical faith looks upon and has respect unto the doctrine, ceremonies, commands, restrictions and unblameable example of Christ alone and strives to conform thereto with all

its powers. For as it is the nature of fire to produce nothing but heat and flame, of the sun nothing but light and heat, the the water moisture, and a good tree good fruit after its natural properties, so also true evangelical faith brings forth true evangelical fruit, in accordance with its true, good, evangelical nature; Yea, even as a virtuous bride, through natural love, is ever ready to hear and obey the voice of her bridegroom, and from a sincere, good, loyal disposition, good-will and love which she has toward him, will ever so conduct herself before her most faithful friend and beloved husband whom she respects and loves with all her heart that for his sake she willingly endures whatever may befall her, even so it is with a true regenerated believer who has been joined to Christ by grace through faith. He has become one with Christ and grafted into Him through ardent, fervent love and is ever willing and ready to do His bidding and will whether it be difficult or easy. For His holy name's sake he is willing to endure all things that may befall him at any time, be it joy or tribulation, satiation or hunger, refreshing or thirst, honor or dishonor, good or evil report, imprisonment or liberty, to live in the land or be exiled, ease or discomfort, life or death (84a; I:118b).

The true believers show in act and deed that they believe, are born of God and spiritually minded. They lead a pious, unblameable life before all men, they are baptized according to the Lord's command, as a proof and testimony that their sins are taken away through Christ's death and that they desire to walk with Him in newness of life; they break the bread of peace with their beloved brethren, as a proof and testimony that they are one with Christ and with His church and that they have or know no other means of grace and of remission of their sins, neither in heaven nor upon earth, than the innocent body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ alone, which He once through His eternal Spirit, in obedience to the Father, has offered up and shed upon the cross for us poor sinners. They walk in all love and mercy, they serve their neighbors, etc. In short, they order their lives, in their weakness, according to all the words, commandments, ordinances, Spirit, rule, example and

measure of Christ, as the Scriptures teach; for they are in Christ and Christ is in them. And therefore they live no longer in the old life of sin after the first earthly Adam (weakness excepted), but in the new life of righteousness which is by faith, after the second and heavenly Adam, Christ; as Paul says, "I do not now live, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). And Christ says, that those who love Him will keep His commandments. (John 14:15). (462b; II:262b)

If you believe truly in Christ as you boast, then show by your works that you believe; for "the just shall live by faith," as the Scriptures say. And that this is the truth has been fully testified and shown by the works of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Samuel, David, Matthew, Zaccheus, Magdalene, Paul and all the true children of God who were from the beginning and even to this day (127b; I:172b).

The regenerated put on Christ and manifest the nature and power of His Spirit in all their fruits. They fear God with all their heart and with all their thoughts, words and works, seek nothing but the glory of God and the salvation of their beloved brethren. Hatred and vengeance they know not, for they love those who hate them, do good to those who despitefully use them and pray for those who persecute them; they hate avarice, haughtiness, unchastity, pomp, wantonness, drunkenness, adultery, fornication, hatred, envy, backbiting, lying, defrauding, quarreling, blood shedding, false sanctity and idolatry, in short all impure, carnal works, and forsake the world with all its lusts. They meditate upon the law of the Lord by day and by night, rejoice over the good and are grieved over the evil. Evil they do not repay with evil, but with good. They seek not self nor their own good alone, but also the good of their neighbor, both as to body and soul. They feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty, entertain the needy, visit the sick, comfort the faint-hearted, admonish the erring and are ready after their Master's example to give their lives for their brethren.

Again their thoughts are pure and chaste, their words are true and seasoned with salt; with them yea is yea and nay nay, and their works are done in the fear of the Lord. Their hearts are heavenly and renewed, their minds peaceful and joyous; they seek righteousness with all their heart. In short, they have through the Spirit and word of God such assurance of their faith, that they will through such faith valiantly overcome all bloodthirsty, cruel tyrants with all their tortures, imprisonments, exiling, spoiling of their property, stocks, stakes, executioners, tormentors and henchmen; and out of a godly zeal, with an innocent, pure heart, with simple yea and nay they are willing to die. The glory of Christ, the sweetness of the Word and the salvation of their souls are dearer to them than all that is under heaven (125b; 1:170a).

Besides we teach the true love and fear of God, the true love of our neighbor, to serve and aid all mankind and to injure none, to crucify the flesh and its desires and lusts, to prune the heart, mouth and the whole body with the knife of the divine word, of all unclean thoughts, unbecoming words and actions. Consider now whether this is not the will of God, the true doctrine of Jesus Christ, the rightful use of the ordinances, and the true life, which is of God, although all the gates of hell may wilfully oppose it (445a; II:244a).

In short, we teach and urge, as far as in us lies, from the Word of the Lord, to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, I Pet. 2:11, to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, Gal. 5:24, not to be conformed to this world, Rom. 12:2, to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, Rom. 13:2, to love not the world, I John 2:15, put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, Eph. 4:22, such as pride, avarice, unchastity, hatred, envyings, gluttony, drinking, idolatry; and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, whose fruits are faith, love, hope, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, Eph. 4:24; Rom. 14:17, Gal. 5:16, longsuffering, charity, compassion, chastity, earnest hatred and rebuke of sin and a sincere, true love of and zeal for God and His word.

I repeat it, such repentance is sincere, fruitful and acceptable to the Lord according to the teaching of His Word (7b; II:19a).

16. Predestination

Zwingli taught that the will of God actuated a thief to steal and a murderer to kill, and that their punishment was also brought about by the will of God — which in my opinion is an abomination above all abominations. (311a; II:294b).

What shall I say, dear Lord? Shall I say that thou hast ordained the wicked to wickedness, as some have said? Be that far from me. I know, O Lord, that thou art good and nothing evil can be found in thee. We are the works of thy hand, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that we should walk therein. Life and death hast thou left to our choice. Thou willest not the death of the sinner, but that he should repent and live. Thou art the eternal light, therefore hatest thou all darkness; thou desirest not that any should perish, but that all repent, come to a knowledge of thy truth and be saved. O dear Lord, so grievously have they blasphemed thine unspeakably great love, thy mercy and majesty that they have made thee, the God of all grace and creator of all things, a very devil, saying that thou art the cause of all evil — thou who art called the Father of lights. Of a surety evil can not come from good, nor light from darkness, nor life from death; yet do they ascribe their stubborn hearts and carnal minds to thy will, in order that they may continue upon the broad way and have a cover for their sins. (171a; I:221b).

17. The Church

The true messengers [of the Gospel] who are one with Christ in Spirit, love and life, teach that which is entrusted to them by Christ, namely repentance and the peaceable Gospel of grace which He Himself has received of the Father and taught the world. All who hear, believe, accept and rightly fulfill the same are the church of Christ, the true, believing Christian church, the body and bride of Christ, the ark of the Lord, etc.

They are chosen to proclaim the power of Him who has called them from darkness unto His marvelous light (539a; II:345b).

Christ's church consists of the chosen of God, His saints and beloved who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, who are born of God and led by Christ's Spirit, who are in Christ and Christ in them, who hear and believe His word, live in their weakness according to His commandments and in patience and meekness follow in His footsteps, who hate evil and love the good, earnestly desiring to apprehend Christ as they are apprehended of Him. For all who are in Christ are new creatures, flesh of His flesh, bone of His bone and members of His body (118b; I:161b).

The true signs by which the Church of Christ may be known:

1. The unadulterated pure doctrine.
2. The scriptural use of the sacramental signs.
3. Obedience to the Word.
4. Unfeigned brotherly love.
5. Candid confession of God and Christ.
6. Bearing oppression and hatred for the sake of the Word of the Lord. (301a; II:83b).

Some of the other parables, as of the net in which good and bad fishes are caught; of the wise and foolish virgins and their lamps; of the wedding of the king's son and the guests, and of the threshing floor with wheat and chaff, although the Lord spoke them in allusion to the church, yet they were not spoken for the purpose that the church should knowingly and wilfully accept and suffer open transgressors in its communion; because in that case Christ and Paul would differ in doctrine, for Paul says that such should be disciplined and avoided. But they were spoken because many intermingle with the Christians in a Christian semblance, and place themselves under the Word and its sacraments who in fact are no Christians, but are hypocrites and dissemblers before their God; and these are likened unto the refuse fish which will be cast out by the angels at the day of Christ; unto the foolish virgins who had no oil in their

lamps; unto the guest without a wedding garment and unto the chaff. For they pretend that they fear God and seek Christ; they receive baptism and the Lord's supper and outwardly have a good appearance, but do not have faith, repentance, true fear and love of God, Spirit, power, fruit, works and deeds (305a; II:88b).

18. The Ordinances

All the rites ordained of God, both of the Old and New Testament, have been instituted that our faith may be exercised and our obedience proven. Therefore we must not use them at our own pleasure, nor change them to suit our fancies, but we must use them as the Lord Himself has ordained and commanded in His Word (19b; I:34b).

For the truly regenerated and spiritually minded conform in all things to the word and ordinances of the Lord; not for the reason that they suppose to merit the propitiation of their sins and eternal life; by no means. For this they depend on nothing except the blood and merits of Christ, relying upon the sure promise of the merciful Father which was graciously given to all believers, which blood alone, I say again, is and ever will be the only and eternally valid means of our reconciliation, and not works, baptism or Lord's Supper, as said above. (115b; I:158a).

Repentance must come before the ordinances, and not the ordinances before repentance. For the signs [ordinances] of the New Testament are in themselves quite powerless, vain and useless, if that which they signify, namely the new contrite life is not in evidence as has been said above in treating of baptism (285a; II:65a).

Dear reader, understand rightly what I write. Without true repentance neither water, bread, wine, or ceremonies, if they were administered even by the apostles themselves, will avail before Jesus Christ. For in Him and before Him a new creature alone, a converted, changed and contrite heart, true fear and love of God, unfeigned love of one's neighbor, a con-

secrated, humble, sober and peaceful life according to the Lord's word and example, will avail (285b; II:66b).

To this end baptism and the Lord's supper were instituted in the Lord's house, that through them we should testify our faith and obedience: That we desire to walk in continuous contrition of heart; that we remember His unspeakably great love and blessings; that we be reminded that He has offered for us His spotless body and has shed His precious blood for the reconciliation of our souls in His exceedingly ardent love for us; that we ever walk with Him in unity of the Spirit and follow in His footsteps; that we love, assist, console, reprove, bear, admonish and serve each other as members of one body, and that we prove ourselves before all the world unto death as the regenerated children of God, in all righteousness, holiness and truth. Behold, dear reader, for such purpose were the signs [ordinances] of the New Testament instituted (286a; II:66a).

This is briefly, in all matters that concern the Christian church, my only foundation and sincere conviction, that before God neither baptism, nor the Supper, nor any other outward ordinances avail if partaken without the Spirit of God and the new creature, but that before God only faith, Spirit, the new creature or regeneration avail, as Paul plainly teaches, Gal. 5:6. All who by the grace of God have received these from above, will be baptized according to the command of the Lord and rightly partake of the Supper. Yea, with ardent desire they accept all the ordinances and doctrine of Jesus Christ and shall never willfully oppose the holy will and plain testimony of God (542a; II:349b).

All who bring you another doctrine respecting the signs or ordinances, and place them before or above faith and repentance, deceive you, however much they may adorn their teaching with choice words, such as sealing, sign of grace, etc., for it is in fact nothing but human wisdom, deception of souls and hypocrisy. For, if the children under the Old Dispensation were received into the covenant by circumcision and those of the New Dispensation by baptism, as he [Gellius] says, it would undeniably follow that the infants who died before the eighth day

and those who were not circumcised in the wilderness [Josh. 5:5], as well as all the females, were not in the Israelitish church or congregation, and consequently had no share in the grace, covenant or promise.

The same would also apply to the children who have died before they could have been baptized. O great abomination! (270b; II:47b).

Ceremonies without the reality are not valid before God. For He is not such a God who has pleasure in any outward shadow, ceremony, type, bread, wine, water, and nominal service, but in spirit, power, deed and truth.

Again, the prince of darkness, the old serpent and the devil, can transform himself into an angel of light. Nothing of an external nature is oppressive or vexatious to him; if he can only gain possession of the citadel of our hearts, and expel therefrom Christ's nature, spirit and power, he has already won the price of his craftiness. Yea, if a man were baptized even by Peter or Paul himself, and received the bread of the holy supper from the Lord's own hand, and never again witnessed the idolatry of the priests, yet if he retained but one of the fruits of the devil whether hatred, envy or bitterness, revengefulness or avarice, pride or unchastity, or any other vice, it would have to be said with the Scriptures that his spirit is ungodly and his life hypocrisy (211; I:265a).

My brethren, it was by no means permitted to change one letter touching the ceremonies of the law of Moses. For it is not the will of the almighty God that we should follow our own inclinations with regard to the ceremonies which He has commanded us, but He desires us alone to observe His good will and pleasure; for this purpose He has commanded them. In the outward ceremonies alone God has no pleasure, but He has commanded them because He ever requires of us the obedience of faith. His wrath has often come upon those who deviated in the practice of His ceremonies from His commandments, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu and many others. For it is His will that we should not follow our own opinion, but that we should hear, believe and obey His holy voice. (402a; II:196a).

For a truly believing Christian is thus minded that he neither will nor may do otherwise than that which is taught and enjoined upon him in the word of his Lord. For he knows that all presumption and disobedience are like the sin of witchcraft, and the end thereof is death. The willfully disobedient are standing outside of the promise ((115b; I:158a).

In the first place, as we said before, we all are accepted into the covenant of God, not by any signs [ordinances], but by grace. — For Abraham was already in God's covenant before he was circumcised, as Paul shows, that his faith was counted for righteousness when he was yet uncircumcised (Rom. 4:3, 11); and because he was in God's covenant, justified by faith, therefore God commanded him the circumcision.

To all those who are thus, by faith, accepted of God through grace into the covenant of peace, with Abraham, God has given as evidences of their faith His ceremonies and figurative signs. Not that they are thereby justified, for if it were by the signs, it would not be grace, but that they should be justified and be children of God, children of the promise, etc., by faith, which they should show by their obedience to the commandments of God, having been called and accepted through grace and consoled by His promise. For those who are obedient unto God are His friends (John 15:14).

Behold, dear reader, in this manner Abraham was circumcised and thus we are baptized, because it is thus commanded of God. He who disobeys the voice of the Lord commanding these ceremonies, and despises the performance of them because of their supposed triflingness, not observing that they were commanded of God, excludes himself from the covenant of grace, by his stubborn disobedience, neither does he seal his faith that it is fruitful and living, but on the contrary, he proves that it is unfruitful and dead before God. For he hears not the voice of his Lord nor lives in accordance therewith, but despises it as vain and useless.

Therefore observe and know that we are not accepted into the covenant by an outward sign, but alone by grace through Christ Jesus. And because we are by grace in the covenant,

therefore He has given and instituted for us His signs, that they shall be observed by them to whom He has commanded them, namely the believers.

For if it were possible that we could come into the covenant of God by any signs or ceremonies, then the merits of Christ would be vain and grace ended. No, brethren, no. Abraham was already chosen, accepted and justified by God, through faith, before he was circumcised, and because he believed and was justified through faith, therefore circumcision was commanded him of God, that he should thereby seal his faith.

Again, Abraham and all his seed, born of Isaac, together with others were already included in God's covenant, women as well as men, and the promise was given to both, yet it was not commanded that the females should be circumcised, but the males. Observe well, dear reader, had they obtained the covenant of God through the signs and not through grace, then the females must have been excluded and without the promise. Not so, it was by grace, it is grace, and it will in all eternity be grace (416b; II:213b).

19. Baptism

We are not regenerated because we have been baptized, ... but we are baptized because we have been regenerated by faith and the Word of God (I Pet. 1:23). Regeneration is not the result of baptism, but baptism the result of regeneration. This can indeed not be controverted by any man, or disproven by the Scriptures (418b; II:215a).

Faith is to precede baptism. For the beginning of all righteousness which avails before God is faith, from which baptism results as a sign and proof of obedience. If the infants, then, had faith, their baptism would not be forbidden by the alleged words in Matthew and Mark (402b; 197a).

The Scriptures know of only one remedy, which is Christ with His merits, death and blood. Hence, he who seeks the remission of his sins through baptism, rejects the blood of the Lord and makes water his idol. Therefore let every one have a

care, lest he ascribe the honor and glory due to Christ, to the outward ceremonies and visible elements (17b; I:32a).

The believing receive remission of sins not through baptism, but in baptism, in the following manner: as with their whole heart they believe the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ which has been preached and taught to them, namely the glad tidings of grace, remission of sins, peace, favor, mercy and eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord, they experience a change of mind, renounce self, bitterly repent of their old sinful life, and with all diligence give attendance to the Word of the Lord who has shown them such great love; and fulfil all that He has taught and commanded in His holy Gospel. Their confidence is firmly established upon the word of grace promising the remission of sins through the precious blood and the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. They therefore receive holy baptism as a token of obedience which proceeds from faith, an evidence before God and His church that they firmly believe in the remission of sins through Christ Jesus, as has been preached and taught them from the Word of God (406a; II:201a).

With the sacrifices, also of the Old Testament was connected atonement in the Scriptures, not because of the worthiness of the sacrifices upon the altars, for the blood of bulls and goats, says Paul, could not take away sin (Heb. 10:4); all that might and could be offered was moreover beforehand the Lord's, yes all the cattle upon a thousand hills, says David (Psa. 50:10); but because they truly believed the word of divine promise and therefore were obedient to His command. Similarly now the remission of sin is preached through baptism, not for the sake of the water or of ceremonies perfomed by us; we say it again, Christ alone is the means of grace; but because we accept the promises of the Lord by faith and in obedience fulfill His word and will (18a; I:32b).

20. Import of Baptism

All who by the grace of God have been translated from Adam into Christ, and been made partakers of the divine nature and are baptized of God with the Spirit and fire of heavenly

love will not contend so deridingly against the Lord and say: What can water avail, but they say with trembling Saul: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and with the penitent on the day of Pentecost: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They will renounce their own wisdom and willingly obey the word of the Lord, for they are led by His Spirit, and through faith, with willing obedient hearts perform all things commanded them of the Lord.

But as long as their minds are not renewed, and they have not the mind of Christ, Phil. 2:5; are not washed in the inner man with clean water from the living fountain of God, Heb 10:22, they may well say, What can water avail us? For the whole ocean would not cleanse them as long as they are earthly and carnally minded (22b; I:38b).

21. Infant Baptism

Since, then, we do not find in all Scripture a single word by which Christ has ordained the baptism of infants, or that His apostles taught and practiced it, we say and confess rightly that infant baptism is but a human invention, an opinion of men, a perversion of the ordinance of Christ (15b; I:29b).

I do not doubt but that you will confess that the faith, which avails with God is a gift of God, a gift which brings forth all righteousness, and that such faith comes from hearing the divine word. If, now, it comes by hearing the word, as Paul teaches, how will it be found in unconscious infants, for it is plain that they can not be taught, admonished or instructed (403a; II:197b).

To baptize before that which is required for baptism, namely faith, is found is as if one would place the cart before the horse, to sow before plowing, to build before the lumber is at hand, or to seal the letter before it is written (415b; II:211b).

Lastly, they appeal to Origen and Augustine and say that these assert that they have obtained infant baptism from the apostles. To this we reply and inquire whether Origen and Augustine have proved it from Scripture. If they have done so,

we desire to hear it. But if not, we must hear and believe Christ and His apostles, and not Augustine and Origen (21b; 1:37a).

Beloved, since the ordinance of Jesus Christ is unchangeable, and it alone is acceptable to the Father; and since He has commanded that the Gospel should first be preached and, secondly, those who believe baptized, it follows that those who baptize and are baptized without being taught the holy Gospel and without faith, baptize and are baptized on their own opinion, without the doctrine and command of Jesus Christ; therefore it is an ungodly, useless and vain ceremony. For had Israel circumcised their females because it was not expressly forbidden, they would have circumcised without the ordinance of God, for He had commanded that the males should be circumcised. It is the same in this instance. If we baptize the unconscious infants, although it is not expressly forbidden in Scripture, just as it was not forbidden to circumcise the females, we baptize without the ordinance of Jesus Christ; for He commanded that those should be baptized who hear and believe His holy Gospel. Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:33. (402a; II:196b)

Again, if the infant baptists assert that infant baptism is not forbidden and that therefore it is right, I reply that it is not expressly forbidden in the Holy Scriptures to bless, as they call it, holy water, candles, palms, goblets, and robes, to hold mass and other ceremonies, yet we say rightfully that it is wrong, first because people put their trust in these things, secondly because it is done without the commandment of God, for He has commanded us not a word thereof, and never should any commandment be observed which is not contained or implied in His holy Word, either in letter or spirit (418a; II:214b).

Search diligently all the Scriptures — Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles — and you will find in more than one instance that God not only had no pleasure in unbidden ceremonies and worship, but that He has often severely rebuked and punished those who observed them. If such ceremonies could be observed with a good conscience for the reason that there is no express command: "Thou shalt not baptize infants,"

then it would also be justifiable to consecrate water, tapers, palms, bells and priests, to say mass, to build cloisters, cathedrals and altars, to turn monk or nun, to make pilgrimages, to pray for the dead, etc., with as much right one could take part in all these things, for in all Scripture there is not a word to be found which expressly forbids these ceremonies or says: You shall not do these things (272b; II:50a).

I know that Luther teaches that faith is present in infants, just as in a believing, sleeping man. To this I reply, first, that if there were such a sleeping faith in little unconscious infants (which however is nothing but human sophistry), it would notwithstanding be improper to baptize such children so long as they would not verbally confess it and show the required fruits. For the holy apostles did not baptize any believers while they were asleep, as we have shown in our former writings (404b; II:199a).

Luther writes that infants should be baptized because of their own faith, and adds, if infants had no faith their baptism would be blaspheming the sacrament. I believe it to be a great error of so learned a man through whom the Lord at the beginning of his writing effected not a little good, to hold that infants who are unable to hear and to understand, have faith, while the Scriptures so plainly state that they know neither good nor evil, that they can not discern right from wrong (Deut. 1:39; Jonah 4:11); and he says that faith is dormant and concealed in infants until they arrive at the years of understanding, even as in a believing person who is asleep. If Luther writes this as his sincere opinion, it shows that he has written much in vain concerning faith and its power; but if he writes this to please men, may God have mercy upon him. We know of a truth that it is only human reasoning and a fable of men, and by God's grace it shall not make void the word and ordinance of the Lord. For we read nowhere in Scripture that the apostles baptized a single believer while asleep. They baptized those who were awake and not the sleeping ones. Why then do they baptize infants before they awake from that supposed sleeping faith, and confess it? (15a; I:29a).

In the third place, we answer: We have in the Scriptures record of four households that have been baptized, namely that of Cornelius, of the jailor, of Lydia and of Stephanas, Acts 10:48; 16:15, 33; I Cor. 1:16, and the Scriptures clearly show that in three of these households all were believers, namely of Cornelius, Acts 10:2, 44-47, of the jailor Acts 16:34, and that of Stephanas I Cor. 16:15. But touching the household of Lydia, the reader should know that although the Scriptures say nothing definite about it, it is not usual in Scripture, nor the custom of the world, to call a family by the wife's name as long as the husband is living. Since Luke here names the house by a woman and not a man, reason teaches us that Lydia was at that time either a widow or a virgin. And how much is to be made of the supposition that there were infants in her household, we will let the God-fearing reader judge. (21a; I:36b).

22. Salvation of Infants

And although infants have neither faith nor baptism, think not therefore that they are lost. O no! they are saved, for they have the Lord's own promise of the kingdom of God; not indeed through any element, ceremony or external rites, but only by grace through Jesus Christ. And therefore we do truly believe that grace is extended to them, yea that they are acceptable to God, pure and holy, heirs of God and of eternal life. On the ground of this promise all Christian believers may be assured of and rejoice in the truth that their children are saved (20b; I:36a).

Dear reader, this is to be held as a sure, eternal and unchangeable rule of divine truth to fulfill all righteousness, namely, first the true preaching of the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ; secondly, to hear with earnestness and to understand; thirdly, to cordially believe the Gospel and to carry out its teaching. This being the case, it follows that the unconscious infants have no faith, for they can not understand and learn. — If they die before they come to years of understanding and before they may hear and believe, they die under the promise of God and are

saved, and this by no other means than the precious promise of grace, given through Jesus Christ, Luke 18:16. But if, having reached the years of understanding, they hear and believe, they should then be baptized. If they do not accept or believe the word when they have arrived at such age, whether they are baptized or not, they will be lost, as Christ Himself teaches, Mark 16:16 (404a; II:198b).

But the little children, and particularly those born of Christian parents, have a peculiar promise which was given them of God, without the medium of any ceremony, but of pure grace, through Christ Jesus, our Lord, who says, "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). This promise satisfies and assures all the chosen saints of God in regard to their children that have not attained to understanding, for they know full well that the word of our Lord Jesus Christ can never fail nor prove false. Inasmuch as He has shown so great mercy to the children that were brought unto Him, that He took them up into His arms, blessed them, laid His hands upon them, promised them the kingdom of heaven and has done or commanded to be done nothing in addition to this, therefore Christian believers have a well grounded and firm assurance of the grace of God concerning their dear children, namely that they are children of the kingdom, of grace, of the promise and of eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord to whom alone the glory belongs, and not by any ceremony. Yea, by this promise they are assured that their beloved children, so long as they are not of understanding years, are pure, holy, saved, and acceptable to God, be they alive or dead. Therefore they give thanks to the eternal Father through Jesus Christ, our Lord, for His inexpressibly great grace toward their children, and bring them up in the love of God, by correcting, teaching and admonishing them, and by walking before them in an unblamable life until they may hear the word of God, believe in it and be guided by it. Then it is time, of whatever age they may be, that they, in obedience to the word of Christ, receive the Christian baptism commanded by Jesus Christ to all Chris-

tians, and which His apostles have thus taught and practiced (429a; II:226a).

It is in my opinion a great error which some entertain, that the children of Jewish parents were acceptable to Christ on account of circumcision, and that our children are acceptable on account of baptism. O great reproach, that in every instance Christ, the only and eternal medium of divine grace, must be set aside and grace must be attributed to the lifeless rites and elements. Here I would ask all infant baptists how they are going to prove that these children [whom Jesus blessed] were all circumcised and that there were not among them female children? If they were acceptable on account of their circumcision, as is asserted, then why were not the adults who were circumcised acceptable? He commanded that adults, although they were circumcised, should be baptized upon their faith, but concerning infants He gave no command to baptize. He took them into His arms, laid His hands upon them and blessed them, promised them the kingdom of heaven and dismissed them, but did not baptize them. (18b; I:33a).

23. The Name "Anabaptists" Repudiated

We must also be the Anabaptists of the theologians, because we baptize upon the confession of faith, as Christ commanded His disciples and as the holy apostles taught and practiced .... We are informed by the Scriptures that Paul rebaptized those who had been baptized with the baptism of John which was of heaven — because they had not been taught about the Holy Ghost. Acts 19. Inasmuch, then, as we but baptize according to the command of Christ, and according to the teaching and practice of the holy apostles, nor do any more than Cyprian did, together with the Councils of Nice and Carthage in this matter (although we admit that we do not believe in all their doctrine), and inasmuch as we rebaptize those who were not baptized with a divine baptism (as were those baptized by John) but with the baptism of Antichrist, and had at the time of their baptism no knowledge of divine matters, as both nature and the Scriptures teach, since they were unconscious infants, (which was not the

case with those baptized of John) and we for these reasons must be the Anabaptists of the theologians, it follows, indeed, that Christ and His apostles, Cyprian and his bishops, the Nicene Council and the holy apostle Paul also must have been Anabaptists. This is incontrovertible (513a; II:318a).

24. The Lord's Supper

The holy supper, as taught by Christ and His apostles, reproves all idolatry and foreign mediums of reconciliation, all hatred, discord and unrighteousness. For it points only to the one offering of Christ which was made by His body and blood once for all, as stated. It expresses Christian peace, unity, brotherly love, and the pious, unblamable life. (31b; I:50a).

In like manner we believe and confess concerning the Lord's holy Supper, that it is a holy sacramental sign, instituted of the Lord Himself, with bread and wine, and enjoined upon His own in remembrance of Him, taught and administered also according to the institution of the Lord, by the apostles among the brethren. It is, first of all, to show forth the Lord's death, as Paul says, to remind us that He has offered up for us His holy body and shed His precious blood for the remission of our sins.

Secondly it is an emblem of Christian love, unity and peace in the church of Christ. "For we, being many," says Paul, "are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread" (I Cor. 10:17). For as a loaf being composed of many grains is one bread, so we also are many members but one body in Christ. And as the members of one body are not at variance with each other but are in every respect of one mind and peaceable among themselves, so it is with all those who in the Spirit and faith are true members of the body of Christ.

Thirdly it is a communion of the body and blood of Christ (I Cor. 10:16), which communion consists in this that Christ has in His great love accepted us and we are become partakers of Him, as Paul says, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Heb. 3:14.

Inasmuch as it is a sign instituted by Christ for the purpose

that it is to show forth and remind us of His death, of love, peace and unity among the brethren, and also the communion of His body and blood, as was said, therefore none can rightly partake of this supper, according to Scripture, but he that is a disciple of Christ, flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone, who seeks the remission of his sins in no other means than in the merits, sacrifice, death and blood of Christ alone, walks in unity, love and peace with his brethren and leads a pious and unblamable life in Christ Jesus, according to the Scriptures (468b; II:270a).

It is as if Jesus had said by instituting this supper: Behold beloved children, so long have I been with you, have taught you my Father's word, admonished, reproved and comforted you and kept you in His name; but now my hour is at hand, this night I shall be betrayed. All that the prophets said of me is about to come to an end. And since I can minister to you no longer with my doctrine and life, I will at least serve you with my painful sufferings, with my body, blood, cross, and death. And this indeed is the reason why I have called you to this supper, namely that I might institute this rite with bread and wine, that you should after my death from time to time come together to commemorate the great mercies of my ardent love, so abundantly manifested toward you, and especially that my love to you was such that I offered my body and gave my blood for you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. I have by my death obtained for you everlasting reconciliation, grace, mercy, favor and peace with my Father, as I have told you, namely, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many," Matt. 20:28 (27a; I:44b).

We should observe that in the Lord's supper Christian unity, love and peace are typified and set forth, after which all true Christians should seek and strive. "For we being many," says Paul, "are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread," I Cor. 10:17. Like as natural bread is made of many grains, broken by the mill, kneaded together with water and baked by the heat of the fire, so also the church of Christ is made up of many believers who are broken in their

hearts with the hammer of the divine word and are baptized into one body with the water of the Holy Ghost and the fire of pure, unfeigned love. And as the natural body is in harmony and peace with all its members, and as each member discharges its duty to promote the good of the whole body, so also it behooves the true and living members of the body of Christ to be in harmony, of one heart and one soul, not quarrelsome and unpeaceable, not selfish and envious, not wrathful and hateful, not malicious, obstinate or bitter one toward another, as are the ambitious, covetous and proud of this world; but in all things be longsuffering, friendly, peaceable, ever ready in true Christian love to serve our neighbor to the extent of our ability, by exhortation and reproof, by comforting, giving of our means and counsel, serving with hard work, yea by giving our body and life; ready to forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us and has ministered unto us by His word, life and death (26a; I:43a).

We teach, seek, and desire that supper which Christ Jesus Himself has instituted and administered, to be observed in a church which is outwardly without spot or blemish, that is, without any known transgression and wickedness; for the church judges that of which it has knowledge but inward wickedness which is not apparent to the Church such as the betraying of Judas, of that God is to judge, for He alone tries the hearts and reins, and not the church. It is to be observed in both kinds, namely bread and wine, to the remembrance of the Lord's death and as a renewal and evidence of brotherly love (444b; II:243b).

And this is the sum of the whole matter, that all who with the disciples and guests of Christ would sit at the Lord's table, whether they be of high or low station in life, rich or poor, must be sound in the faith and unblamable in conduct and life. — But if any one has a good appearance before men, and is at heart proud, avaricious, carnal and without the Spirit of God, he is not judged of the church, but of the Lord Himself, the searcher and trier of men's hearts and reins, as the Scripture saith. Therefore we admonish all who would go to the Lord's table, to examine themselves before they partake of it; for all who eat

unworthily of this bread and drink of this cup, eat and drink condemnation and judgment to themselves, I Cor. 11:29 (28b; I:46b).

25. On the Doctrine of the Corporeal Presence of Christ in the Bread and Wine

In the first place we must take heed that we do not make the visible, perishable bread and wine the Lord's real body and blood as some do; for to believe this is contrary to all nature, reason and Scripture, yea it is evident blasphemy of the Son of God, an abomination and idolatry. But as Israel had to keep the passover annually, at the appointed time according to the command of Moses, to commemorate that the almighty God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, did graciously preserve His people from the judgment and plagues, when He slew the first-born of the Egyptians, and by His strong hand and outstretched arm led them out so gloriously and wonderfully and saved them from the iron furnace of Egypt and the dread tyranny and dominion of Pharaoh, according to the word of His promise; and therefore the paschal lamb is called the Lord's passover, that is, passing over, Ex. 12, — the rite for the reality, for the lamb was not the passover although so called, but it only typified the passover, as said; so also the bread of the holy supper is called the body, and the wine the blood of the Lord, the sign, I say, for the reality. Not that it is actually the body and blood of Christ, for with that He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of His Father, immortal and unchangeable in eternal majesty and glory; but it is an admonishing type and a memorial of the fact that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, has redeemed us from the power of the devil, from the dominion of hell and eternal death, by offering up an immaculate sacrifice, His innocent body and blood, and has triumphantly led us into the kingdom of His grace; as He Himself says, "This do in remembrance of me" Luke 22:19 (24b; I:41b).

They believe the bread of the Lord's supper to be the real flesh, and the wine the real blood of the Lord, and have concluded this from the words of Christ, "Take eat, this is my

body," etc. They do not consider that Christ Himself, in the sixth chapter of John where He fully instructs us about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, says that it profiteth nothing to eat His flesh and drink His blood literally, neither were this possible, for He would ascend up to where He was before (John 6:62, 63). And therefore the eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood is not to be taken according to the letter but according to the spirit, as He Himself says, in the same chapter, "The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." All who thus understand this from the Scriptures are by many abused as cursed heretics and blasphemers of the sacrament,[1] and must suffer on account of it by water, fire and the sword (30b; I:49a).

26. The Washing of the Saints' Feet[2]

The third ordinance is the washing of feet of the saints which Jesus Christ has commanded His disciples (John 13: 4-17), and this for two reasons. The first is that He would have us know that He Himself must cleanse us after the inner man and that we must by Him be washed from the sin which besets us, (Heb. 12:1) from all uncleanness of the flesh and spirit, that we may become purer from day to day, as it is written: "He that is pure, let him become purer, he who is holy, let him become more holy," etc. (Rev. 22:11). And this [cleansing by the Lord] is needful, yea it must be if we would be saved. Therefore Christ says to Peter: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John 13:8). Then Peter answered: "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head." To this

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[1] Luther and his friends applied the reproachful epithet *Sacramentschaender* to the Zwinglians as well as the Anabaptists, since both denied the bodily presence of the Lord in the supper.

[2] Menno Simons mentions feet washing (189; I:242, end of first column, and 636; II:449b) as well as the holy kiss, though his extant writings do not have a treatise on either of these subjects. The following article on feetwashing is taken from Dirk Philips' booklet *Of the Church of God, Bib. Ref. Neerl.*, vol. X, pp. 397-399; *Enchiridion or Hand Book*, Elkhart, Ind., 1910; pp. 388-390.

Christ replied: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, and is clean every whit" (John 13:10).

By this He makes it clear that the feet washing wherewith Christ washes us is very necessary, and how it is signified, inasmuch as those whom He does not wash have no part with Him and that those who have been washed by Him need no more than that their feet be washed and they are wholly clean. For it is Christ who must wash us from our sins with His blood and He who is sprinkled and washed therewith needs no more than to have the earthly members, the evil lusts and desires of the flesh mortified and overcome and through grace he is wholly clean and no sin imputed unto him (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:1-7; Col. 3:5; I John 1:7; Rev. 1:5; Rom. 8:13).

The second reason why Christ instituted the ordinance of feet washing is that we should humble ourselves before one another and that we hold our fellow-believers in the highest respect for the reason that they are the saints of God and the members of the body of Jesus Christ and that the Holy Ghost dwells in them. (Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3; I Pet. 5:5; Jas. 4:10; Col. 3:12, 13; I Cor. 3:16). These things Christ teaches us in these words: "Ye call me Master and Lord and ye say well: for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (John 13:13-17).

Now if they are happy (blessed) who know and do this, how void of blessing shall those be who profess to be apostles and messengers of the Lord and do not know these things, or if they know, do not do them or teach others to do them.

27. Discipline

It is evident that a congregation or church can not continue in the salutary doctrine and in a blameless and pious life without the proper practice of discipline. Even as a city without a wall and gates, or a field without an inclosure or fence, or a house

without walls and doors, so is also a church without the true apostolic exclusion or ban. For it would be open to all deceiving spirits, all godless scorners and haughty despisers, all idolatrous and insolent transgressors, yes to all lewd debauchers and adulterers, as is the case with all the great sects of the world which style themselves, although improperly, churches of Christ. In my opinion it is a leading characteristic, an honor and a means of prosperity for a true church to teach with Christian discretion the true apostolic exclusion and to observe it carefully with vigilant love according to the teaching of the holy divine Scriptures. (188; I:241b).

For so long as the pastors and teachers [in the primitive Christian church] earnestly taught and required a pious, godly life, served baptism and the Supper to the godly alone, and rightly practiced discipline according to the Scriptures, they were the church and congregation of Christ. But as soon as they began to seek an easy, careless life, and hated the cross of Christ, they laid aside the rod, assured the people of peace, and gradually became loose in discipline, they became the church of Antichrist, Babel, and the world, as has, alas, been fully evident for many centuries. Yea, my reader, if we had not with all earnestness maintained to the present time this means ordained of God — scriptural discipline — our people would, because of wicked ones, be a reproach to everybody, while now, I trust they are in their weakness by the grace of God (although the wicked world will not acknowledge it) an example and a light to many. (289a; II:69b).

The world knows no other excommunication but that when a great crime has been committed, the executioner bans the guilty one with the sword, gallows or fire and puts them to death for the sake of their evil doing. (291b; II:72b).

It is evident that these words of Christ (Matt. 18) teach, in the first place, if any one should err or sin against his brother through negligence, infirmity, inconsiderateness, inexperience, or ignorance, that he should not in consequence hate him, nor connive at his transgression, but out of true brotherly love admonish and reprove him, lest his brother fall into greater error and

perish; but that he may by this means be brought to overcome his fault.

In the second place, these words teach us that he who has transgressed should receive the admonition of his brother in love and be again sincerely reconciled, as is also taught in Matt. 5:23, 24. This is indeed the nature and disposition of true believers who are born from above of the holy seed of peace, that if they trespass against a brother, they have neither peace nor tranquility of heart until they have in true love satisfied him and are fully reconciled with him in Christ, and that without hypocrisy. For they are a generation of peace, children of love, who manifest their Christianity in the power, and testify by their deeds that they know God.

Thirdly, if the trespassing brother receives in obedient love the brotherly admonition given him in sincerity, is humbly reconciled and ceases from his error, the transgression should be forgotten and forgiven in all sincerity. Even as God, for Jesus' sake forgives all our sins, so must we also in Christ forgive our neighbor all his transgression which he has committed against us. And we must not, nor can, harbor any hatred or revenge against him, even if he should never repent, as we have the example in Christ and in Stephen.

From all of which it is more than clear that these three several admonitions of which Christ here speaks, first between him and you alone, secondly before witnesses, and thirdly before the church, do not refer to all offensive, carnal sins of which the eternal sentence of death is the penalty, but to the shortcomings between brother and brother only. (201a; I:254b).

Therefore take heed. If you see your brother sin, do not pass by him as one that is not concerned about his soul, but if his fall be not unto death, help him to arise immediately, by loving admonition and brotherly instruction, before you eat, drink, sleep or do anything else, as one who ardently seeks his salvation, lest your poor erring brother be hardened in his sin, and perish. (633b; II:445a).

But if he receive the admonitions of his faithful brethren, if he confess his fall, if he be sorry, promise to better his life,

show works and fruits of penitence, then receive him as a returning, beloved brother, no matter how deep may have been his fall. But let him beware, lest he mock his God, for that he is received of the brethren does not avail if he be not accepted of God. Let him, I say, take heed, that his accepting the admonitions, his sorrow, his promise of reformation and his penitence may be upright and true before God, for He searches the hearts and reins and He knows all intents and thoughts of men. (Jer. 17:10; John 2:25; Rom. 8:27).

If indeed his accepting the admonitions, his sorrow, promise and penitence do not proceed from a true purpose of heart and an earnest, burning desire, but are only lukewarm and dissembling, spiritless, hypocritical, from the motive that he does not desire to be publicly excluded from the communion of the brethren, he is yet excluded of Christ and is a hypocrite in the sight of God; nor will God at any time look upon him as being anything else. For God, the righteous judge, does not judge according to the outward appearance, but solely according to the hidden intentions of the heart.

Say, beloved, inasmuch as the matter stands thus before God, of what avail is it to have the mere name of a Christian brother, if he have not the inward evangelical faith, love and unblamable life of a true brother of Jesus Christ?

Or of what avail is it to partake of the holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ with the brethren, if we have not the true fruits which are symbolized by this supper, showing forth the death of Christ, the love of the brethren and the peaceable unity of the faith in Jesus Christ? So it is also of no avail to be in the fellowship of the brethren outwardly, if we are not inwardly in the communion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, brethren, no one is cut off by us, or excluded from the fellowship of the brethren but those who have already excluded and separated themselves, either by false doctrine, or by a blamable life, from Christ and His communion. For we do not desire to exclude any one but to receive them; not to cut off but to restore, not to reject but to win them back; not to afflict but to comfort, not to condemn but to save them, etc.

My brethren, this is the true reason why and to what end this cutting off or exclusion is so earnestly taught and commanded in the Scriptures, by Christ Jesus and His holy apostles, first, for the sake of false doctrine, secondly, sinful, carnal life, further that the disciplined are to be admonished (those who are willing to accept admonition). (634a; II:445b).

28. Qualification of Ministers

The true teachers, shepherds and laborers in His vineyard seek nothing but the eternal honor, glory and praise of God and the true conversion, regeneration and salvation of those whose brotherly care is entrusted and commanded to them of God and His church. Yea, He sends such as are unblameable both in doctrine and life, who are led by the Holy Spirit, who sincerely grieve and weep with Christ over those who do not realize the gracious time of their visitation; who rejoice with all the angels of God over the conversion of sinners; who long for the salvation of all mankind as a hungry person hungers for bread; who so faithfully accept the word and truth of the Lord that they teach or practice not a word otherwise than Jesus Christ Himself has taught, practiced and commanded, the pure unadulterated Biblical word in the true sense and meaning of Christ and His apostles. (534b; II:341b).

In the first place, we desire, according to the Word of God, that no bishop, pastor or teacher should in the church of the Lord be permitted to teach and administer the ordinances except those who are found in the true doctrine, ordinances and life of our Lord Jesus Christ and are unblamable in all things (I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6; Lev. 21:7; Ezek. 44:21). For the Word of the Lord is truth (John 17:17), it is spirit and life (John 6:63), therefore it can not be administered by the carnally minded, not by children of eternal death, nor the untrue, but by the truthful, by the spiritually minded, by those who rightly confess Jesus Christ and who are assured of eternal life in their own hearts and who in Christ Jesus live unblamably before God, that they may say with Paul, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). (444a; II:243a).

29. Support of the Ministry

At all places where they established churches, the apostles ordained bishops and teachers who were unblamable in doctrine and life, and have never mentioned a stipulated annual salary, benifices or rents. For they were men of God, servants of Christ, full of the love of God and their dear brethren, and through love, through an inward constraint they labored, taught, sought, pastured and watched, not only for one, two, or three hours a week in the synagogue, but at all times and in all places, in synagogues, streets, houses, mountains and fields.

And as they had received the knowledge of the kingdom of God, the truth, love, and Spirit of God, without price, so they were again ready to dispense it according to their ability to their needy brethren without price. And as for the temporal necessaries of life, the church was sufficiently constrained through love and the Spirit and Word of God to give to such faithful servants of Christ and watchers over their souls all the necessaries of life, to assist them and provide for them that which they could not obtain themselves. (535b; II:341b).

Say, kind reader, did you ever read in the Scriptures of any prophets, apostles, and shepherds who said to any cities, districts or villages, if you will care for our necessaries of life, or if you will give us a certain amount of money, or revenue, we will teach you the Word of the Lord? O no, reader, no. It never was and never will be the way of the holy prophets, apostles or servants of Christ. Of this we are sure. (466a; II:267a).

30. The Social Message of the Church

In the fourth place some of them charge and assert that we have our property in common. We reply that this charge is false and altogether without foundation. We do not teach nor practice the doctrine of having all property in common. But we teach and maintain by the word of the Lord that all true believers are members of one body, are baptized by one Spirit into one body (I Cor. 10:18) and have one Lord and one God (Eph. 4:5, 6).

Inasmuch as they are thus one, therefore it is Christian and reasonable that they truly love one another and that the one member be solicitous for the welfare of the other, for both the Scriptures and nature teach it. All Scripture urges charity and love, and it is the one sign by which a true Christian may be known, as the Lord says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples (that is, that ye are Christians) if ye have love one to another." John 13:35.

Beloved reader, it has not been heard of that an intelligent person clothes and cares for one part of his body and leaves the rest destitute and naked. O, no, it is but natural to care for all the members. Thus it must be with those who are the Lord's church or body. All who are born of God, are partakers of the Spirit of the Lord and are called into one body of love, according to the Scriptures, are ready by such love to serve their neighbors, not only with money and goods, but also, according to the example of their Lord and Head, Jesus Christ, in an evangelical manner, with life and blood.

They exercise charity and love as much as they have ability; they suffer no one to be a beggar among them; they distribute to the necessity of the saints, receive the miserable, take the stranger into their houses, console the afflicted, assist the needy, cloth the naked, feed the hungry, do not turn their face from the poor, and do not despise their own suffering members — their own flesh. Isa. 58:7, 8. (504a; II:309a).

To repeat: This love, charity and community we teach and practice, and have for seventeen years taught and practiced in such manner that although we have to a great extent been robbed of our property and are yet robbed, and many a pious, God-fearing father and mother has been put to death by the fire, water, or the sword, and we have no secure place of abode, as is manifest, and besides there are dear times, yet, thanks be to God, none of the pious, nor any of their children who have been committed to us, have been found to beg. (504b; II:309b).

Is it not an annoying, unbearable hypocrisy that they boast of following the word of God, and of being the true Christian church, and never realize that they have entirely lost the evidence

of true Christianity. For although they have plenty of everything and many of their own people fare sumptuously and live in voluptuousness, in superfluous expense, going about in silk and velvet, gold and silver and all kinds of pomp and pride and furnish their houses with all manner of costly ornaments, and have their coffers well filled, yet they suffer many of their poor afflicted members, although they are their fellow believers, have received one baptism and partaken of the same bread with them, to go begging, some of them suffering from the bitterest want, hunger and need, and so many of their aged, sick, lame, blind members are compelled to beg their bread at their doors.

O, ministers, ministers, where is the power of the gospel which you preach? Where is the signification of the Supper which you administer? Where is the fruit of the Spirit you have received? And the righteousness of your faith which you can paint and present so beautifully before the poor ignorant people? Is it not all hypocrisy that you preach and would pretend and maintain? Are you not ashamed of your easy going gospel and worthless preaching and fruitless breaking-of-bread, you who in so many years have not gathered sufficient strength from your gospel, teaching and sacraments that you have been able to preach your suffering, miserable members from the streets, notwithstanding the Scripture plainly teaches and says, "Whoso has this world's good and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Also Moses: "There shall be no beggars among you." I John 3:17; Deut. 15:8. (505a; II:310a).

31. The Dangers and the Right Use of Riches

Since then the Lord himself, as also His faithful servants James and Paul, have in so clear words set forth the dangers of riches and of high station, and experience teaches how high they exalt themselves, as may be educed from their titles, houses, shields, clothes, servants, horses and dogs, and in consideration of Christ's words, Matt. 18:3, it would be more in accordance with evangelical righteousness, if Gellius, instead, would diligent-

ly point such proud and exalted persons to the humility of Christ, that they may learn to deny themselves and to consider their origin and destination, that they may repent of their excessive pomp and vanity, their superfluity and ungodliness, fear God from their hearts, walk in His ways and in true humility of heart serve their neighbors with their riches. (239a; II:17a).

32. Non-conformity to the World

This is not a kingdom in which one adorns himself with gold, silver, pearls, silk, velvet and costly finery, as does the proud, haughty world, and also your leaders, giving you liberty to do likewise, under the excuse that it is harmless if your heart is free from it. So even Satan might excuse his pride and pretend the lust of his eye to be pure and good. But this is the kingdom of all humility in which not the outward adorning of the body but the inward adorning of the Spirit is desired and sought with great zeal and diligence, with a broken heart and a contrite mind. (65b; I:96a).

33. The Doctrine of Non-resistance

The regenerated do not go to war nor fight. They are the children of peace who have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and know of no war. They give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. Their sword is the word of the Spirit which they wield with a good conscience through the Holy Ghost. (126a; I:170b).

Since we are to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29), how can we, then, fight our enemies with the sword? Does not the apostle Peter say: "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps; who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet. 2:21-23; Matt. 16:24). And this accords with the words of John who says:

"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:6). And Christ Himself says: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). Again: "My sheep hear my voice.. and they follow me" (John 10:27).

And this is the voice of Christ: "Ye have heard that it has been said: An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39). Again: "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, etc. (Matt. 5:43-45; Rom. 12:20; I Pet. 3:9; Luke 6:34; I Pet. 1:15).

Behold these are the words of Christ. All those, now, who are His sheep will hear His voice. (627b; II:435b).

My dear reader, if the poor, ignorant world with an honest heart accepted this our hated and despised doctrine, which is not of us but of Christ, and faithfully obeyed it, they could well change their deadly swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, level their gates and walls, dismiss their executioners and henchmen. For all who accept our doctrine in its power, will by God's grace not have any ill will to any one upon earth, and not against their most bitter enemies, much less wrong and harm them by deeds and actions; for they are children of the Most High who from their hearts love that which is good and in their weakness avoid that which is evil; nay, hate it and are inimical thereto. (322a; II:103a).

Antichrist rules through hypocrisy and falsehood, with violence and the sword, but Christ reigns through patience with His word and Spirit; neither does He use any other sword nor sabre.

O man! man! look upon the irrational creatures and learn wisdom. All roaring lions, all frightful bears, all devouring

wolves, live in peace among themselves with their own species. But you, poor, helpless creatures, created in God's own image and called rational beings, are born without teeth, claws, and horns and with a feeble nature, speechless and strengthless, yea, neither able to walk nor stand, but have to depend entirely upon maternal care — to teach you that you should be men of peace and not of strife. (50b; I:76a).

Peter was commanded to put his sword into the sheath. All Christians are bidden to love their enemies, do good to those who do them evil, and pray for those who abuse and persecute them; to give the cloak also if any one sue them at law for the coat; if they are stricken on the right cheek to turn to him who abuses them the other also. Say, beloved, how can a Christian, according to the Scriptures, consistently retaliate, rebel, war, murder, slay, torture, steal, rob and burn cities and conquer countries? Matt. 26:52; John 18:10; Matt. 5:12, 39, 40. (502b; II:306b).

All who are led by the Spirit of Christ know no sword but the Word of the Lord. Their weapons are powerful, fervent prayer, a long-suffering, patient heart, strong, immovable faith, a living hope and an unblamable life, as has been said. By such means the Gospel of the kingdom, the word of peace is to be spread and defended against the gates of hell. (42b; I:65a).

O, beloved reader, our arms and weapons are not our swords and spears, but patience, silence and hope, and God's Word. With these we must fight our battle. Paul says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." In that way we intend and desire to resist the kingdom of the devil; and not with swords, spears, cannons and coats of mail.

True Christians know of no vengeance, how ever they may be wronged; in patience they possess their souls (Luke 21:18). They do not break the peace even if they should be tempted by bondage, torture, poverty, and by the sword and fire. They do not cry for vengeance, as does the world, but with Christ they pray, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." They have, according to the declaration of the prophet, beaten

their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. (502b; II:307a).

Again, our fortress is Christ, our defence is patience, our sword is the Word of God, and our victory is the sincere, firm, unfeigned faith in Jesus Christ. Spears and swords of iron we leave to those who, alas, consider human blood and swine's blood of well nigh equal value. He that is wise, let him judge what I mean. (55a; I:81b).

I am well aware that the tyrants who boast themselves Christians attempt to justify their horrible wars and shedding of blood, and would make a good work of it, by referring us to Moses, Joshua, etc. But they do not reflect that Moses and his successors, with their iron sword, have served out their time, and that Jesus Christ has now given us a new commandment and has girded our loins with another sword. — They do not consider that they use the sword of war, which they wield, contrary to all evangelical Scripture, against their own brethren, namely those of like faith with them who have received the same baptism and have broken the same bread with them and are thus members of the same body.

Further we reply that we know and use no other sword than that which Jesus Christ Himself brought down from heaven and which the apostles have used in the power of the Spirit, namely that which proceeds from the mouth of the Lord, the sword of the Spirit, which is "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." With this sword and no other we desire to destroy the kingdom of the devil, reprove all wickedness, preach righteousness, etc. in like manner as Jesus Christ and His holy apostles and the prophets did in this world. I do not here mean the prophets Elijah and Samuel, understand me rightly, who also used the sword, but I mean the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., who only reproved with doctrine, and not otherwise.

This sword we wield and would not let emperor or kings, or authorities take it from us or forbid its use. For Peter says, "We ought to obey God rather than men." To the praise and

service of Him who has girded us with this sword we must wield it, whether it bring us life or death, as it may please God. (149; I:198).

Captains, knights, soldiers and such like bloody men are offering to sell soul and body for money, and swear with uplifted hand that they will destroy cities and countries, apprehend and kill the citizens and inhabitants and rob them of their possessions, although they have never harmed them nor given them any provocation. O what an accursed, wicked, abominable business! And yet it is said that they protect the country and people and assist in administering justice! (98b; I:137a).

It is clearer than mid-day that many of you are so mad, so influenced by the spirit of the devil, that ye hate, envy, bite and devour one another. You have destroyed whole principalities, cities, castles and citadels with your accursed wars and uproar, and have shed human blood like water. You deprive poor citizens and peasants (those of your own faith) of body and possessions, by burning, robbing, plundering, apprehending, imposition and torturing even those who have never harmed you or given you a rash word. Such good-for-nothing, godless saints, or Christians we do not read of in Scripture. (129a; I:174b).

I tell you the truth in Christ; the truly baptized disciples of Christ, who are baptized inwardly with the Spirit and with fire, and outwardly with water according to God's Word, know of no weapons other than patience, hope, non-resistance and God's Word. Paul says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, etc. (II Cor. 10:4, 5). Our weapons are not such with which cities and countries are desolated, walls and gates broken down and human blood shed like water, but they are weapons to destroy the spiritual kingdom of the devil, put away ungodliness and break the flinty hearts that have never been affected by the heavenly dew of the holy word. (55a; I:81b).

Thus we do not combat with carnal, but with spiritual weapons, with patience and with the Word of the Lord, trusting in Christ, against the flesh, the world and the devil. Nor shall there ever be found other weapons with us. Therefore be not

afraid of us (I tell you the truth in Christ Jesus); for we do not desire your destruction but your regeneration — on account of which I have these seven years suffered slander and scorn, anxiety, persecution and great peril of being imprisoned; and persecution is still increasing. (511; II:327b).

34. Capital Punishment

If a criminal should truly repent before his God and be born from above, he would then be a saint and a child of God, a fellow-partaker of grace, a spiritual member of the Lord's body, sprinkled with His precious blood and anointed with the Holy Ghost — and for such an one to be hanged on the gallows, executed on the wheel, burned at the stake or in any manner be harmed by another Christian who in Christ Jesus is one heart and soul with him, I should think strange and out of place, considering the compassionate, merciful, loving disposition, spirit and example of Christ, the meek Lamb, which example He has commanded all his chosen children to follow.

Again, if he remain impenitent and his life be taken, this would be nothing else but to unmercifully cut short his time for repentance of which, in case his life were spared, he might yet avail himself; to tyrannically deliver his soul which was purchased with such a precious treasure unto the devil — never taking into consideration that the Son of Man who says, "Learn of me" (Matt. 11:28), "I have given you an example" (John 13:15), "Follow me" (Matt. 16:24), is not come to destroy souls, but to save them (Matt. 18:11; Luke 19:10). (603b; II:407b).

Profane history shows that the Lacedemonians who were heathen did not put their criminals to death but imprisoned them and put them at labor. (604a; II:408a).

35. Swearing of Oaths

We are aware that the authorities advance the opinion that it is right to swear whenever oath is made to the truth. This we answer simply with the word of the Lord, Matt. 5:33-37. To

swear to the truth was permitted to the Jews under the law, but to the Christians it is forbidden in the Gospel. (471a; II:273b).

Christ says, "Ye have heard that it has been said to them of old time: Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you: Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool, etc. (Matt. 5:33-35). And you, Micron, say that none but light minded and false oaths are thereby prohibited, as if Moses had permitted Israel to swear lightmindedly and falsely and that to us under the New Testament only, Christ has forbidden it.

If we have the same liberty as the Israelites in this matter, as you assert ..... then tell me, why did the Lord not say: Ye have heard that it has been said to them of old time: Thou shalt not forswear thyself, and I say unto you: Obey this injunction. But he says: Moses has permitted you to swear rightly; but I say unto you: Swear not at all.

Since, then, it is more than clear that Jesus Christ, the teacher of righteousness, points us away from the oath of Moses which was an oath of truth and was sworn by the name of the Lord and which you use and highly recommend, and points us to the truthful yea and nay, and I well know that His word is the truth and His commandment life everlasting, therefore I am frank and bold thus to teach it, believing of a truth that He will not deceive us by His teaching. (604b; II:409a).

Behold, beloved reader, before these words of Christ all human laws and commandments concerning the oath must yield and be abolished, all kinds of oaths no matter how they be performed, be it by words, or by raising your hand, or laying your hands upon your breast, or upon a cross, or upon the New Testament, etc., and the true yea and nay, ordained of the Lord Himself must be put in its place, if the authorities and subjects do not want wantonly to transgress the word of the Lord and ignore it as useless; for whatsoever is more than yea and nay, Christ says, cometh of evil. The same is also taught by James: "Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea

be yea and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." Jas. 5:12. (471a; II:273a).

The Scriptures teach that we should hear Christ, for He is the king in Jacob, Isa. 9:7, the king of righteousness, the teacher and the prophet promised of God, who hath taught us the word of the Father, and His word is truth, His commandment is eternal life.

Inasmuch as we confess and sincerely believe that no emperor or king may rule or command contrary to His word, since, He is the head of all princes and the King of all kings (Rev. 1:5; 19:16) and to Him every knee shall bow which is in heaven, in earth or under the earth (Phil. 2), and He has so plainly forbidden us to swear and pointed us to *yea* and *nay* alone, this is the reason why we, fearing the Lord, do not and may not swear, though we must hear and suffer so much on that account from the world. (470b; II:272a).

The oath is required for no other purpose than to obtain truthful statement and testimony. Can, then, the truth not be told without an oath? Do all tell the truth who are under oath? You will admit that the first question is to be answered in the affirmative and the second in the negative.

Is, then, the oath itself the truth of the testimony, or does the truth depend upon him who swears the oath? Why then do not the authorities require the truth to be told with yea and nay, as ordained of God, rather than with an oath which God has forbidden? For they can notwithstanding punish those who are found false in their yea and nay, the same as those who commit perjury.

I trust that no person is so confused as not to know that the ordinances of God which are of heaven can never give way to the earthly ordinances of men. (605b; II:410a).

We hereby pray all lords and authorities, for Jesus' sake, to fear the Lord sincerely, and to be subject to the word of the Lord in this matter of the oath. We ask them to consider why they require the oath, namely, that that shall be fulfilled to which oath is made. Inasmuch, now, as we deem our *yea* and *nay* to be of no less import than an oath, why, then, require any further

affirmation of us than the word of the Lord teaches and allows?

That yea is yea and nay nay with all true Christians, is fully proven by those who, in our Netherlands, are so tyrannically visited with imprisonment, confiscation and torture, with fire, the stake and the sword, when indeed with one word they could escape all this, if they would misuse their yea and nay. But as they are born of the truth, therefore they walk in the truth, and testify to the truth unto death, as may be abundantly seen in Flanders, Brabant, Holland, West Friesland, etc. (472b; 274b).

36. Duties toward the Magistracy

In temporal things we teach and exhort that the emperor, king, lords and princes, yes all in authority, are to be sincerely obeyed in all their laws and regulations as far as they are not contrary to God's word. (Rom. 13:1-3). (56a; I:82b).

Therefore we pray you through the mercy of God, O ye great ones of the earth whom we acknowledge as our gracious lords in all temporal things, that you let the eternal mighty King, Jesus Christ be the only Savior, Lord and Sovereign of our souls, even as He was ordained of His Father, and you confine your service and office to temporal matters to which you have been called. For we desire with all our hearts to render "unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." (11b; I:24b).

Again, that we should be disobedient to the magistracy in the things to which they are ordained of God, is not true; understand me, in lawful things, such as working on dykes, roads and rivers, paying duty, taxes, tribute, etc. But that they, contrary to Jesus Christ, by commandments of men, undertake to rule and lord it over our conscience, following their own wantonness and not the will of God, to this we do not consent, but much rather sacrifice possessions and life, than for any man's sake, be he even emperor or king, to sin knowingly against Jesus Christ and His holy word. (149b; I:199a).

The writings which we have published during several years abundantly prove that the accusation against us of disobedience

to the magistracy is unfounded and untrue. We confess and have always confessed as long as with our small talent we have served the word of the Lord, that the office of the magistrates is ordained of God; and we have always been obedient to them when their demand was not contrary to the word of God, and we desire to do so all our lives. For we are not so ignorant but know well what the word of God teaches and demands of us in this respect. Taxes and duties we pay, as Christ has taught us and Himself has rendered (Matt. 17:22). We pray for the imperial majesty, kings, lords, princes and all in authority and honor and obey them (I Tim. 2:2; Rom. 13:1). (498b; II:302b).

We resist neither the emperor, king, nor any authority in that over which they are given jurisdiction by God, but we are ready to render all obedience even unto death in all things that are not contrary to God and God's Word, and we know well what the Scriptures teach and enjoin concerning this matter (Rom. 13:1-8). But we desire mercy of you to the extent that we, under your gracious protection, may in liberty of conscience live, teach, work, and serve the Lord. (11a; I:23b).

37. Liberty of Conscience

Tell me, kind reader, where have you, in all the days of your life read in the apostolic Scriptures, or heard, that Christ or the apostles called upon the power of the magistracy against those who would not hear their doctrine or obey their words? Yea, reader, I know to a certainty that wherever the government is to perform the ban with the sword, there is not the true knowledge, Spirit, word and church of Christ. (290; II:71).

I repeat, if we are disobedient to God in religious matters, we are willing and anxious to be instructed, taught, and corrected by the Word of God, for we strive diligently to do and to fulfill His most holy will. Or if we are not obedient unto the Emperor in matters over which God has called and ordained him to rule, then we will willingly submit to punishment, such as should, in your judgment be laid upon us. But if we with all our heart seek and fear the Lord our God, as I trust we do, and are willingly obedient to the imperial majesty in temporal things,

as we should be according to the Word of God, and notwithstanding for the sake of the truth of the Lord we must suffer and be persecuted, and put to death, then it is in our place to consider that "the disciple is not above his master nor the servant above his lord." Yet you should know and realize, O ye beloved, illustrious lords, ye judges and keepers of the law, that as often as such are apprehended, condemned and put to the sword by you, you thrust your tyrannical sword into the blessed body of our Lord Jesus for they are "of his flesh and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30); they are His chosen, beloved brethren and sisters who are with Him born from above of one Father (John 1:13) — From their whole heart, drawn and led by the Holy Spirit, they have through faith given themselves to the service of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ and henceforth do not live according to their own will, but alone according to the will of God and the direction of His holy blessed word. They would surrender all they possess upon earth and suffer slander, scourging, persecution, anxiety, famine, thirst, nakedness, cold, heat, poverty, imprisonment, banishment, fire, sword or any other manner of death rather than to deny the Gospel of grace, forsake the truth of God, or depart from the love which is in Christ Jesus. But the vain doctrines and commandments of men they will not accept. (431; II:229).

Faith is a gift of God, therefore it can not be forced upon any one by worldly authorities or by the sword; alone through the pure doctrine of the holy Word and with humble ardent prayer it must be obtained of the Holy Ghost as a gift of grace. Moreover it is not the will of the Master of the house that the tares should be rooted up as long as the day of reaping is not at hand, as the Scriptural parable teaches and shows with great clearness.

Now if our persecutors are Christians, as they think, and accept the word of God, why do they not heed and follow the word and commandment of Christ? Why do they root up the tares before the time? Why do they not fear, lest they root up the good wheat, and not the tares? Why do they undertake to do the duty of angels who, at the proper time, shall bind the

tares in bundles and cast them into the furnace of everlasting fire?

Since we injure no man upon the whole earth in the very least by our faith, or unbelief (as they say), it would be right that they commit us with our belief or unbelief to the Lord and His judgment alone who at His own time will judge all, and not like savage mad pagans proceed against us with their devouring sword. It is the right and true disposition of a true, pious Christian to seek the poor erring sinner to repentance and not to destruction, as these do. (150; I:199).

Christ Jesus with His powerful word and Holy Spirit is the protector and Lord of His church, and not the emperor, king, or any worldly potentate. The kingdom of the Spirit must be protected and defended by the sword of the Spirit, and not with the carnal sword. This is, according to the doctrine and example of Christ and His apostles, too clear to be controverted.

Further I say: If the government rightly knew Christ and His kingdom, they would in my opinion, rather choose death, than with their worldly power and sword undertake to settle spiritual matters, which are not subject to the authority of man but to that of the great and almighty God alone. But now they [the magistrates] are taught by their theologians that they should arrest, imprison, torture and slay those who are not obedient to their doctrine, as may, alas, be seen, in many cities and countries. (323; II:104).

Beloved rulers and judges, if you take to heart these cited Scriptures, and diligently reflect upon them, you will observe that your office is not your own, but God's office and service: and it is in your place to humble yourselves before His majesty, fear His great and adorable name and rightly and reasonably perform your ordained office; further that you should not so unscrupulously, with your earthly and temporal power, undertake to adjust that which belongs to the jurisdiction and kingdom of Christ, the Prince of all princes, you should not by your iron sword judge and punish that which is reserved solely for the judgment of the Most High, namely the faith and matters pertaining thereto, as also Luther and others maintained in the

beginning, but after they had come to a higher and more exalted station, they have forgotten it all. (449; II, p. 303).

How haughtily do they assume without any awe or fear the authority of God and the office of the Holy Ghost; they drive Jesus Christ, the head of all princes and powers, to whom is given all power in heaven and on earth, from the throne of His divine majesty, and judge with their iron sword, after their own blind opinion and carnal purpose the chosen God-fearing, pious hearts who are enlightened in God through Jesus Christ. (139; I:186).

Say, beloved where do the Holy Scriptures teach that in Christ's kingdom and church, conscience and faith which stand under the authority of God alone, are to be regulated and ruled by the violence, tyranny, and sword of the magistracy? In what instance have Christ and the apostles ever done, advised or commanded this? For Christ says simply: 'Beware of the false prophets,' and Paul commands that a heretic is to be shunned after one or two admonitions. John says that we shall not greet or receive into our houses the transgressor who does not bring the doctrine of Christ. But they say not: Down with the heretics, arraign them before the magistrates, imprison them, drive them from cities and countries, cast them into the fire and water, as the Romish have done for many years, and even now is found to a great extent among you who fancy yourselves to adhere to the Word of God. (334a; II:118).

Do not excuse yourselves, beloved sirs and judges, on the plea that you are the servants of the Emperor. It will not acquit you in the day of vengeance. It availed Pilate nothing that in the name of the Emperor he crucified Christ. Serve the Emperor in civil matters as far as the Scripture warrants, and serve God in divine matters. In the day of Christ you can not justify yourselves by the authority of men.

Do not interfere with Christ's jurisdiction and kingdom, for He alone is the ruler of the conscience and beside Him there is none other; let Him in this matter be your Emperor and His holy word your placard and you will soon become tired of tyranny and murdering. (58b; I:86).

Besides, the proud, carnal, worldly, idolatrous and tyrannical princes who do not know God (I speak of the evil princes) set up their mandates, decrees and laws as authoritative, however much they may be contradictory to God and His blessed Word; just as if the almighty Father, the Creator of all things who holds heaven and earth in His hands, who rules all things by the Word of His power, had ordained them to command, rule and according to their own judgment prescribe ordinances not only in the temporal kingdom of this perishable world, but also in the heavenly kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. O no, beloved, no. This is not the will of God, but it is an abomination in His sight if mortal man will usurp for himself His authority. (439; II:238).

I think, beloved brethren, that I have clearly shown that the excuses of the tyrants by which they would avert their tyrannical murdering to be just and right, are heathenish in principle (154; I:205).

Say now, all who are guilty of innocent blood and who would palliate your conduct with the mandate of the Emperor, where have you read a single word in all the teachings of Christ which gives authority to torture or put to death any one for the sake of faith? Where have the apostles ever taught or countenanced such a practice? Should not matters of the spirit, i. e., of faith, be subject to the judgment of the spirit alone? Why do the Emperor and you undertake to usurp the authority of God, judging things which you understand not and which are not committed to you? Do you not consider what befell Pharaoh, Antiochus, Herod and many others, because they feared not the Most High and raged against His people? Dear men, how wilful, arrogant and proud you are toward Him who created you! Do you suppose that the Scriptures are mocking us and are not the truth? (153; I:204).

The first parable is explained by Christ himself: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world (understand it rightly, the field is the world, and not the church, as Gellius would have it); the good seed are the children of the

kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels." Matt. 13:37-39.

My reader, understand it rightly. Christ, the Son of man sows His seed (God's word) through His Spirit in the world. All who hear and believe it and fulfill it in obedience are here called the children of the kingdom. In the same manner the enemy sows his tares (false doctrine) in the world, and all that hear and follow him are called the children of evil. Both wheat and tares grow together in the same field, namely the world. The husbandman does not want the tares to be plucked out before their time, that is, he desires not that they should be delivered to destruction, but be permitted to remain until the harvest, lest the wheat be destroyed with the tares.

Oh my reader, if the preachers rightly understood this parable and had the true fear of God, they would not cry out so vehemently against us poor people who, alas, everywhere are in their opinion tares, Anabaptists and schismatics: Away and to death with the heretics — even if we held heresies, from which God preserve us. Alas, alas! it is the good wheat which they thus destroy. But what does our testimony avail? Satan must persecute and murder, for it is his nature and work, as the Scriptures teach. (304b; II:88a).

38. Higher Education

Reader, do not misunderstand me. Learning and a knowledge of languages I have never in my life despised, but have from my youth honored and loved. Although I have not acquired them, yet (thanks be to God) I am not so bereft of my senses that I should despise or ridicule the knowledge of the languages through which the precious word of divine grace has come to us. I wish from my heart that I and all the pious possessed such learning, if we could in true humility use it rightly to the praise of our God and the service of our neighbor, in the pure fear of God. (357a; II:145b).

39. Worldly Titles

Say, kind reader, did you ever hear or read that the holy apostles and prophets were covetous of such high, vain titles, as are the theologians and preachers of the world? It is true, the word Rabbi or Master was applied to the ambitious scribes and Pharisees, but not to the apostles and prophets. For we do not read of Doctor Isaiah, or Master Ezekiel, or Reverend Paul or Peter. No, no; those who have rightly taught the Word of the Lord were not in their time honored by the world with such high-sounding names. (465a; II:266a).

40. Anti-Secrecy

Lo, kind reader, thus we have from the beginning of our ministry been ready and desirous to give an account of our faith to every person who asked it in good faith, whether they were ruler or citizen, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, man or woman. And today we are ready to do so as far as is possible to us, for we are not ashamed of the Gospel of the glory of Christ. If any one desire to hear from us, we are prepared to teach; if any one wish to know our principles, it is our hearty desire, if our writings do not suffice, to explain them clearly. — For it is our earnest endeavor that the truth may be brought to light. But the blood-thirsty murder of Antichrist must not be attempted, I say, for it is of the devil and inconsistent to a Christian. (515b; II:321b).

41. Duties to Children

The Holy Scriptures teach that God purifies the heart by faith, that faith comes by hearing, and righteousness through faith. Therefore let all parents who truly love their children take heed that they rightly and clearly instruct them from the Word of God as soon as they may be able to receive and understand it; that they may guide them in the way of truth and zealously watch over all their life; that they may from youth learn to know the Lord their God, to fear, love, honor, thank and serve Him; so that the inborn evil nature of sin may not

rule in them nor overcome them to the everlasting shame of their poor souls. (110b; I:151b).

Therefore all you who fear the Lord and love your children with a love that is of divine nature, seek their salvation with all your heart, even as Abraham, Tobit and the Maccabean mother did. If they transgress, correct them firmly; if they err, exhort them lovingly; if they are childish, bear them patiently; as they are able to receive it, instruct them Christian-like. Dedicate and consecrate them to the Lord from their youth; watch over their souls as long as they are committed to your care, that you may not lose your heavenly reward on their account. Pray without ceasing as this pious Syro-phoenician woman, that the Lord may grant them His grace, that they may resist the devil, subdue their sinful nature through the Lord's Spirit and help, and walk from their youth up before God and His church in all righteousness, truth and wisdom in a true, firm faith, unfeigned love and living hope, in an upright and holy life, unblamable and without offence, abounding in the fruits of faith unto eternal life. Amen. (112a; I:153b).

My beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, who sincerely seek to follow God's Word, instruct your children from youth up, and daily admonish them with the word of the Lord; set them the example of a blameless life. Teach them and admonish in proportion to the development of their understanding, constrain and correct them with discretion and moderation, without anger or bitterness, lest they be discouraged. Spare not the rod if necessity require it.

I write and admonish you again, take heed lest the blood and condemnation of your children come upon you. If you love them with a godly love, teach, admonish and instruct them in God, lest the word, blood and death of the Lord be made unto them of no effect and His name and church be slandered on their account by the unwise.

Pray to almighty God for the gift of His grace, that in His great mercy He may guide and keep them through His Spirit in the right path. Be concerned about their salvation as for your own souls. Teach, instruct, admonish, threaten, correct and

chastise them as may be required. Do not permit them to keep company with undisciplined, wicked children among whom they hear and learn nothing but lying, swearing, fighting and knavery. Urge them to read and practice writing and bring them up in habits of industry. (220b; I:274b).

My brethren in Christ, if we should see any one in danger of being drowned or burned, or in any dangers that threaten their lives, and there were a prospect that we could render them help, would not our inmost souls be moved with compassion toward them, if haply we might afford relief? Undoubtedly. And now we see with our own eyes, if we but believe God's Word, that they are walking in the shadow of eternal death and liable to be devoured by hell and its unquenchable fire, unless from their heart they turn unto Christ and His word, repent and be saved as the Scriptures teach. Therefore consider the terrible wretchedness of their poor souls which will live forever, either in heaven or in hell; and strive diligently and faithfully that in some way, through your faithful ministry of love and by the direction and instruction of the divine word they be rescued and delivered from everlasting destruction and be made partakers of salvation. For genuine love is of such a nature that it is constantly hungering and thirsting after the glory of God and the salvation of all men, even of those who are strangers to us according to the flesh. (220a; I:273b).

42. The Glorious Hope

Finally I beseech and exhort you to consider with all diligence and earnestness that which is promised in the world to come to all the overcomers and soldiers of Jesus Christ, namely the incorruptible, eternal kingdom, the crown of glory and the life that will remain forever. Therefore, O thou people of God, put on thine armor and make ready for the conflict — not with external weapons and armor as the blood-thirsty barbarous world, but alone with unwavering faith, tranquil patience and fervent prayer. It will and can not be otherwise, the combat of the cross must be fought and the winepress of suffering must be trodden. O thou bride and sister of Christ, prepare thyself.

The thorny crown must pierce thy head and the nails transfix thy hands and feet; thy back must be scourged and thy face spit upon. Gird thyself and be prepared, for thou must go with thy Lord and Bridegroom without the camp, bearing His reproach. At the place of the gallows thou must offer up thy sacrifice. Watch and pray. Thine enemies are more numerous than the hairs of thy head or the sand of the sea. Though their hearts, hands, feet and swords are exceedingly red and stained with blood, be not dismayed, for God is thy leader. Thy life on earth is an incessant warfare. Fight valiantly and thou shalt receive the promised crown. (158b; I:210b).

For although the children of Abraham were grieved with much sorrow and pain for some hundreds of years, yet the Lord according to His pomise led them forth victoriously and gave them the land of promise. So also it will be with us. If we doubt not His promises, but cling to them with a firm faith, as Abraham; if by faith we fear, love, honor, thank and serve the Lord who has given them, walk in His commandments and possess our souls in patience, though ever so lamentably we are persecuted by the hellish Pharaoh and his fierce, unmerciful servants, though we be oppressed, smitten, robbed, murdered, burned at the stake or drowned in the water, yet shall the day of our salvation quickly arrive and all our tears shall be wiped from our eyes and we shall be arrayed in the white silken robe of righteousness and with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob follow the Lamb and sit down in the kingdom of God, and possess the land of eternal peace. Praise God, ye who suffer for Christ's sake, and lift up your heads, for the time is near when ye shall hear, "Come ye blessed," and ye shall then eternally rejoice with Him. (87a; I:122b).

XX

MENNO SIMONS' WRITINGS

	Place in the Folio Edition of 1681	Place in the Complete Works of 1871
Plain and Clear Proof Against the Blasphemy of John of Leiden	619-631	II :425-440
The Spiritual Resurrection	177-185	I :229-237
Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm	160-176	I :213-228
The New Birth	120-130	I :165-178
The Foundation	1-70	I : 11-102
Christian Baptism	393-433	II :189-231
The Reason Why I do not Cease Teaching	435-445	II :233-255
Of the True Christian Faith	71-120	I :103-164
Loving Admonition, on Discipline	631-637	II :441-449
Brief and Clear Confession, to John a' Lasco	517-542	II :325-350
Clear Account on Excommunication	337-350	II :120-137
Confession of the Triune God	383-391	II :179-188
Questions and Answers, on Discipline	473-478	II :276-281
Confession Concerning Justification, etc.	457-473	II :257-276
Brief Defense to all Theologians	331-336	II :115-120
Humble Supplication to all Magistrates	325-330	II :107-114
Defense and Reply Concerning False Accusations	491-516	II :297-323
The Cross of Christ	133-150	I :179-212
Reply to Gellius Faber	225-324	II : 1-105
Confession, on the Incarnation of Christ (Reply to a' Lasco	351-382	II :139-177
Reply to Martin Micron	543-618	II :351-424
Duties Toward Children	215-222	I :269-276
Instruction on the Excommunication	185-214	I :239-268
Answer to Sielis and Lemeke	479-490	II :283-295

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To the Melchiorites at Amsterdam, folio edition of Menno's works, 637-640; English works, I:277-280.

To the Brethren in Amsterdam, folio edition, 641-642; English works, I:281-282.

To the Brethren at Franeker in Friesland, *Bib. Ref. Neerl.,* 7:444-447; English works, I:283-284.

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To the Brethren in the Waterland, folio edition, 392; English works, II:232.

To Margaret Edes, folio edition, 434; English works, II:401-402.

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To David Joris. *Nederl. Archief voor K. Geschiedenis,* vol. 5, 1845, pp. 73-77. *Zeitschr. f. hist. Theol.,* 1863, pp. 143-146.

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A collection of various books of Menno Simons was printed in 1600 and 1601 at Hoorn in Holland. His works (not complete) were for the first time printed in 1646. The large Folio Edition of Menno Simons' Complete Works was published at Amsterdam in 1681 by H. J. Herrison. In the English language *The Complete Works of Menno Simons* appeared in 1871 at Elkhart, Indiana, and in 1876-1881 the works were printed at the same place in the German language.[1] A critical edition of Menno's writings is in preparation in Holland.

[1] The repeated assertion that the translators and printers of Menno Simons' Works have changed and perverted certain sentences in his writings and "have given spurious copies of his works to the world" is without any foundation whatever. A comparison with the original editions shows that the sentences in question have been accurately reprinted in the later editions and correctly rendered in the English Works.

XXI

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Augsburg Confession. The most authoritative confession of the Lutheran Church, written by Melanchthon, 1530.

Baum, Johann Wilhelm. Professor in the Protestant Seminary (Reformed) in Strasburg.

Beza, Theodor. (1519-1605). The successor of John Calvin in Geneva.

Blaurock, Georg. One of the founders of the first church of the Swiss Brethren in Zurich. He was burned at the stake at Clausen in Tirol, in 1529. See Martyrs' Mirror, p. 415.

Bossert, Gustav. A well known Lutheran historian of Germany.

Brandt, Geeraerdt. Church historian of the Remonstrants in Holland in the eighteenth century.

Bucer, Martin. (1491-1551). The most noteworthy of the German state-church reformers, besides Luther.

Calvin, John. (1509-1564). The Reformer of French Switzerland. Founder of Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

Capito, Wolfgang. (1478-1541). Zwinglian reformer in Strasburg.

Carlstadt, Andreas. (1480-1541). At first Luther's co-worker in Wittenburg, and later his opponent. Luther's acceptance of the Roman doctrine of the sacraments as means for regeneration and forgiveness of sin was offensive to him. He died as professor in Basel.

Charles V. (1500-1558). Emperor of Germany, ruler of the Netherlands and King of Spain.

Cloister. A convent or monastic establishment; the living place of a community of monks or nuns.

Cornelius, Carl Adolf. Born 1819. Professor of history at Bonn and Munich. A Catholic whose writings on Anabaptist history are distinguished for impartiality and fairness.

Cramer, A. M. Mennonite minister at Middelburg in the Netherlands. Historian.

Cramer, Samuel. (1842-1913). Son of A. M. Cramer. Professor in the Mennonite Theological Seminary in Amsterdam.

Denck, Hans. (1495-1527). An Anabaptist leader who later advocated "the middle way" or "stillstand." He died in 1527.

Detmer, Heinrich. Head Librarian in the Royal Library at Munster.

Diet. The administrative assembly of the old German Empire, consisting of representatives of the various provinces and free cities.

Doopsgezinden. The official name of the Mennonites of the Netherlands, though popularly they are known as Mennonites. The word means those who follow the doctrine of (believers') baptism.

Ecumenical Council. A general council or synod of the bishops and theologians of the early Catholic Church.

Egli, Emil. Professor of church history in Zurich and editor of the new edition of Zwingli's works. He published two important books on the history of the Swiss Anabaptists.

Elector. One of the (seven) princes of the old German Empire entitled to choose the Emperor.

Electorate. A state or province ruled by an elector.

Estates. The representatives of the old German Empire.

Flemish Mennonites. The Mennonites of Flanders, or those who, in consequence of the extraordinarily bloody persecution prevailing in that province fled from Flanders to other parts.

Franck, Sebastian. (1499-1543). A Come-outer of the Reformation times. He rejected the ordinances and all church organization. A noteworthy historian.

Geneva. A city in French Switzerland; for many years the scene of John Calvin's labors and the center of the Calvinistic Reformation.

Grebel, Conrad. The most distinguished of the group of men who founded the first congregation of the Swiss Brethren at Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525. He died in prison at Maienfeld, in 1526.

Hardenberg, Albert Rizaeus. Reformer of Bremen. Died in 1574.

Hegler, Alfred. Professor of Protestant theology at Tübingen in Wurtemberg.

Herzog-Hauck Theological Encyclopedia. The great Protestant Encyclopedia. The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia is based on it.

Hierarchy. A body of ecclesiastical rulers; the Roman priesthood.

Hoekstra, Sytse. (1822-1898). Professor in the Mennonite Theological Seminary in Amsterdam.

Hofmann, Melchior. The founder of the Melchiorites or Covenanters. He was imprisoned in Strasburg from 1533 to his death (1543 or 1544).

Holland. In Menno Simons' time this name was applied to the northwestern part of the Netherlands, not to the Netherlands in general.

Honorius. (384-423). Emperor of the Western Roman Empire.

Hosius, Stanislaus. (1504-1579). Cardinal and prominent Roman Catholic theologian.

Host. The wafer used instead of the bread in Mass as well as in the communion service of the Roman Catholic Church. The host is believed to be Christ Himself and hence is worshiped. The elevation of the host is a feature of Mass, the host being held up and presented before the congregation which worships it in kneeling posture.

Hubmaier, Balthasar. The most distinguished writer among the Anabaptists of South Germany, Switzerland and Moravia. His followers constituted a distinctive party of Anabaptists. He was burned at the stake in or near Vienna in 1528

Hunzinger, A. W. Lutheran theologian in Hamburg, Germany.

Huterites. Named after Jacob Huter who was burned at the stake at Innsbruck in Tyrol, in 1536. They differed from the Mennonites and Swiss Brethren principally in having their possessions in common. They have a number of churches in South Dakota and Montana. Not all their congregations adhere to the communistic life.

Krauth, Heinz. Anabaptist martyr who was beheaded at Jena in Saxony, on January 26, 1536.

Kuehler, W. J. The successor to Professor S. Cramer in the Mennonite Seminary in Amsterdam.

Kuijper, Abraham. The noted Dutch Reformed theologian, former prime minister of the Netherlands.

Landgrave. The title of the ruler of Hesse.

a'Lasko, John. (1499-1560). A native of Poland where he labored as a reformer in the later years of his life.

Loserth, Johann. Distinguished Protestant church historian of Austria.

Manz, Felix. One of the founders of the first Swiss Brethren congregation in Zurich. He suffered martyrdom by drowning at Zurich, in 1527. See Martyrs' Mirror, p. 400.

Marbeck, Pilgram. After the martyrdom of Michael Sattler, in 1527, the most prominent minister among the Anabaptists in South Germany. He labored, principally, at Strasburg and Augsburg.

Matthys, Jan. A baker of Haarlem in Holland who, with John

of Leyden, became the founder of the Munsterite sect. He lost his life during the siege of Munster in 1534.

Melanchthon, P. (1497-1560). Luther's most distinguished helper in the task of the church reformation. Professor in Wittenberg.

Melchiorites. The followers of Melchior Hofmann; also known as Covenanters.

Menius, Justus. (1499-1558). The reformer of Thuringia. He wrote a number of books against the Anabaptists.

Micron, Martin. (1522-1559). Born in Flanders, probably at Ghent. Labored as Zwinglian Reformer in London, Frankfort a. M. and Norden in East Friesland.

Moravia. Province of Austria, east of Bohemia.

Musculus, Wolfgang. (1497-1563). Reformed theologian. Pastor in Strasburg and Augsburg; since 1549 professor of theology in Bern.

Netherlands. In the Reformation period the Netherlands comprised modern Belgium as well as Holland.

Protestant. In 1529, at the Diet of Speier, the Lutheran and Zwinglian Estates protested against a plan which was designed eventually to suppress the Reformation, hence they were called Protestants and this designation has become the usual name of Christian professors not belonging to the Roman Catholic or to one of the Eastern churches.

Reformed Church. In certain countries the followers of Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin are known as the Reformed, while in other countries they are called Presbyterians. In America the Reformed and Presbyterians are distinct denominations.

Rothmann, Bernt. The theologian of the Munsterites.

Sacrament in both kinds. In the Roman Church the cup is withheld from the laity under the pretext that the bread or host is the body of the Lord and that the body is not bloodless, hence the blood is given although the cup is withheld. The expression "both kinds" refers to the cup and bread.

Saints. In the language of Scripture the believers are the saints. In Roman Catholic theology the saints are those who have been canonized or declared holy by the pope and to whom prayer is to be offered.

Scheffer, Jakob Gysbert de Hoop. (1819-1893). Professor in the Mennonite Theological Seminary in Amsterdam. The most distinguished Mennonite historian.

Schwenckfeld, Caspar. (1490-1561). He is considered the founder of the Schwenckfelder Church, although he did not desire to found a church. His followers organized themselves after his death.

Servetus, Michael. (1511-1553). A Spaniard who was condemned to death and burned at the stake in Geneva for various unorthodox teachings.

Speier or Spires. A city in the Palatinate where the German Diet convened repeatedly in the Reformation period.

Strasburg. A city on the upper Rhine. The capital of Alsace.

Theodosius II. (401-450). Emperor of the Eastern Empire (Capital Constantinople).

Theodosius III. Eastern emperor who ruled 716-717.

Thirty Years' War. (1618-1648). A religious war, at least in its first period, between the Catholic provinces of Germany headed by the Emperor, and the Lutheran and Zwinglian states. The latter were aided by (Lutheran) Sweden and (Catholic) France.

Trijpmaker, Jan. Jan Volkerts of Embden was a brogue (holl. *trijp*) maker by trade and was called by this name.

Transubstantiation. The doctrine that the Bread and Wine is converted into the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist or Mass.

Tschackert, Paul. Professor of theology (Protestant) in the University of Göttingen.

Unitarian. One who, unduly emphasizing the unity of God, denies His Trinity, and hence also denies the deity of Christ. The Unitarians believe in Jesus of Nazareth as a great moral teacher, but not as the Savior.

Valentinian III. Emperor of the Western Roman Empire from 425 to 455.

Van Braght, Thieleman Janz. (1625-1664). Minister of the Mennonites of Dort in the Netherlands. A prominent conservative leader and staunch opponent of the new views advocated by Galenus Abrahams. He presided over the great conference held in June, 1660, at Leyden. Author of the "Martyrs' Mirror" and of a catechism which was used till the middle of the nineteenth century by conservative Mennonites.

Volkerts, Jan. Baptized by Melchior Hofmann in Embden, labored at Embden and Amsterdam, suffered martyrdom December 5, 1531.

Vos, K. Mennonite minister at Middelstum in the Netherlands.

Waterland. A district in the northern part of the province of Holland in the Netherlands.

Wittenberg. City in Saxony. The center of the Lutheran Reformation. Both Luther and Melanchthon were professors in the university at this place.

Wheel. The expression "the wheel" is used in Menno Simons' writings for "breaking on the wheel" which was a form of torture

and execution. The victim was placed on a cart-wheel and his limbs tied to the spokes. On the slowly revolving wheel his bones were broken with blows of an iron bar.

Wizel, George. A Lutheran theologian of the Reformation period who returned into the fold of the Roman Church.

Woodsawer, (Houtzager) Peter. Mentioned in Obbe Philips' "Confessions." His occupation was that of a wood sawer; his family name is not known. Dirck Philips was baptized by him (1533).

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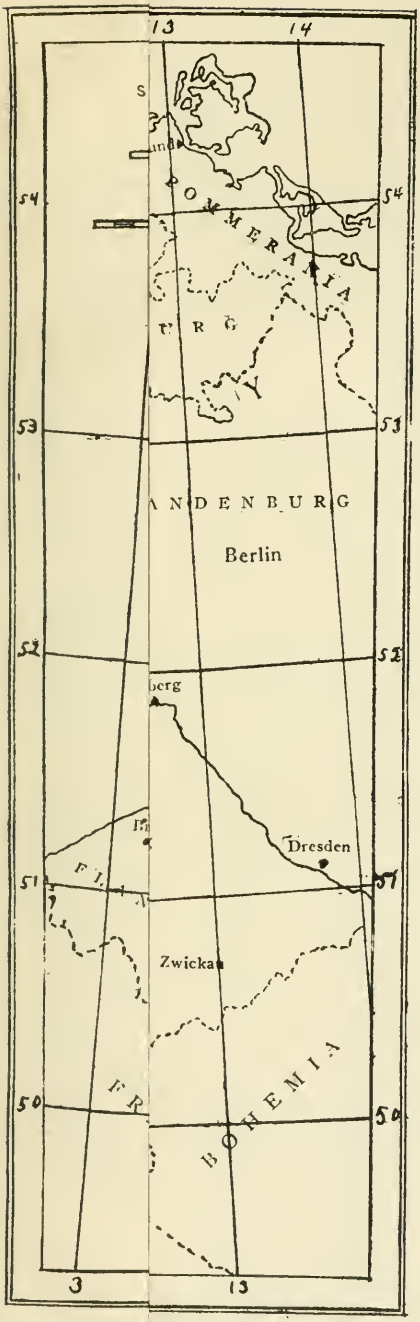
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